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The frauds of Romish monks and priests

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Gabriel d'Emiliane

THE

FRAUDS

OF

ROMISH MONKS AND PRIESTS,

IN

SEVEN LETTERS FROM ITALY;

DESCRIPTIVE OF THE

MOCK MIRACLES, MONASTERIES, CONFRATERNITIES,
PROCESSIONS, SUPERSTITIOUS OBSERVANCES,
&c. &c.

OF

THE CHURCH OF ROME.

A NEW EDITION,

WITH AN INTRODUCTORY PREFACE.

DUBLIN:
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PREFACE.

FROM the period so fatal to the peace and happiness of mankind, when the Church of Rome first assumed a supremacy over the Christian world, she has endeavoured, by all the methods which force or sophistry could supply, to maintain and consolidate her ill-founded pretensions. The dark night of ignorance and semi-barbarism, which overshadowed Europe from the fifth to the fifteenth century, was highly favourable to the growth of this monstrous despotism; and the Roman Pontiff may be said, during that long period, to have dragged even kings at his chariot wheels: they were compelled to wield the sword to strike his enemies, and to open their coffers to gratify his avarice, under the penalty of eternal damnation,—or, perhaps what they dreaded more, the loss of their temporal authority. The people in the mean time were led, by prejudices imbibed in infancy, to revere the priests as demi-gods, to whom, as deriving their authority from the infallible Vicar of Jesus Christ, they might safely commit the keeping of their souls. To render their influence over the minds of their deluded votaries more absolute, the Romish Clergy, like

the Jewish Scribes, had taken away the key of knowledge from the people. They knew well that in the Sacred Volume no foundation was to be found for the assumed supremacy and infallibility of the Romish Church; for the monstrous absurdity of transubstantiation; the daily sacrifice of the mass; the intercession of saints, and the adoration of their images; the money-making doctrines of purgatory and indulgences; the celibacy of the clergy; monkery; and all their consequent train of processions, pilgrimages, festivals, mock-miracles, &c. They knew well that it was only during the night of ignorance that they could retain their vassals in the chains of spiritual slavery, and that should the light of revelation be permitted to break in upon their benighted minds, they would quickly discover that the religion of Jesus Christ was not a religion of display and pomp, resting in carnal ordinances, while the heart remained unchanged. They would discover that the kingdom of God consisted not in meats and drinks, in outward rites and ceremonies, but in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. In fine, they would discover the foundation of sand, on which was established their lofty assumption of being the sole and infallible interpreters of God's will to mankind; and that, instead of feeding their flock with the wholesome nourishment of his word, they had been teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. But though the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers took counsel together, He that sitteth in the heavens had them in derision. At the glorious epoch of the reforma-

tion the sun of divine truth burst forth once more from its long obscurity; the angel, with the everlasting gospel, visited the nations; their darkness was dispelled, their fetters were burst, and millions abandoned Popery for ever!

From that period to the present, religious and civil liberty, true science and civilization, have advanced with steady pace, notwithstanding the efforts which the Papal system, though shorn of its strength, has continued to make in order to impede their progress. But among the higher orders many, though possessed of enlightened minds, having little taste for theological disquisitions, are still content to pay an outward veneration to the religion of their ancestors, and of their political party; a dereliction from which would, in their conception, be the greatest degradation of their characters: while the unhappy unlettered multitude, debarred from the study of the word of God, except through the glosses and comments of the Church of Rome, still hold the priest in the same awful light as their forefathers of the twelfth century; and the *antiquity*, the *infallibillity*, and the *catholicity* of their church, those high-sounding words spoken by them, are sufficient to satisfy all their doubts and scruples. These are the main pillars of the superstructure of Popery, two of which, even if proved, are fallacious evidences of the truth of any system; the third belongs not to man.

Could the Church of Rome substantiate, from the evidence of Holy Scripture, what rests solely on a highly improbable tradition, that her

Pontiffs derive their authority from St. Peter, whom they stile "the Prince of the Apostles," in opposition to the whole tenor of the New Testament, we would say with Ambrose, "They do not possess the inheritance of Peter who do not hold the faith of Peter." Now we find that the faith of Peter differs at the very out-set from that of his pretended successors. They tell us that Peter is the rock on which Christ has built his Church.—Peter, on the other hand, in the 2d chapter of his 1st epistle, calls Christ himself the rock, the chief corner stone of his Church; and the whole Papal hierarchy cannot produce, from the only writings of St. Peter extant, his two epistles, any authority for those fearful distortions which they have made in that religious system which was instituted by Christ and his Apostles. "Ye are my disciples," said Jesus, "if ye do whatsoever I command you." But the Romish Church has rendered his commandments of no effect, through their traditions, and superadded others which he had prohibited; and still her advocates presumptuously contend that they have the old church, with as much reason and good sense as the man possessed, who after having got, at various times, three new blades and two new handles for his knife, asserted that he still had his old knife.*

* We most earnestly refer those who wish to be furnished with arguments on these points, drawn from Holy Writ, the Fathers of the Church, and from the writings of many eminent divines of the Romish Church, to "A Refutation of certain Primary Doctrines of Popery," by the Rev. Robert Craig, A. M.

On the assumption that St. Peter is the rock on which Christ built his Church, and that the Roman Pontiffs derive their authority from him, as the first bishop of Rome, rests the second pillar of Popery, its *infallibillity*. But if they cannot prove that St. Peter filled the primatical see, the Roman Pontiffs cannot be his successors ; if they can give satisfactory evidence of this, they must also prove that they still hold the faith of Peter ; and, after having done all this, we cannot admit their claims to infallibillity till they have proved, that Peter himself remained infallible after Christ had declared, (as the Church of Rome asserts,) that Peter was the rock on which the Redeemer built his Church.

That they have failed in the two first points has been already shewn ; and if we believe the infallible word of God, Peter proved to be glaringly fallible no less than three times after this supposed dignity was conferred upon him :—first, in presumptuously reproving his divine Master, which called forth that severe rebuke, " Get thee behind me Satan ;"—secondly, in denying him ;—and thirdly, in being guilty of dissimulation, for which he was severely reprehended by St. Paul. But could we be convinced that the possession of the Papal chair had conferred infallibillity upon him, we should still require proof that he had transferred this supereminent gift to his successors ; and moreover, that this gift included in it a power to alter, as it suited the exigencies of the Church, the laws and ordinances, which an infallible God had given in his infallible word,

for the government of that Church. We are not ignorant that the Church of Rome has assumed the right of her Popes and Councils to make changes in, and additions to, the Christian system, from the concluding words of our Lord's last commission to his Apostles,—"Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." But if this promise included in it an intimation, that the system in which he had instructed them might need emendation, and conveyed to them an authority to add to, or diminish therefrom, would we not have some proof in the Acts of the Apostles, or in the Epistles, that they themselves had acted upon that authority. The obvious meaning of our blessed Lord, in giving this consolatory promise to his Apostles, was, "I have commissioned you to preach the gospel, the glad tidings of salvation to all nations; I am about to remove my bodily presence from you; but fear not, I will be with you and all faithful ministers of my word, by my infallible Spirit, to the end of the world, to support you in the arduous work in which you are about to be engaged, and to instruct you in the right understanding of that infallible word, which is able to make men wise unto salvation." If the holy Scriptures contain the revealed will of God, surely he must approach the nearest to infallibillity who adheres most closely to the doctrines and precepts which they inculcate. How near the Church of Rome comes to this species of infallibillity we shall examine, by comparing their leading doctrines with a few of those many striking passages in the sacred oracles which pointedly condemn them.

CHURCH OF ROME.	THE BIBLE.
All saving truth is not contained in the Holy Scripture, but partly in the Scripture and partly in unwritten traditions; which whosoever doth not receive with the like piety and reverence as he does the Scriptures, is accursed.—*Council of Trent.*	The Holy Scriptures are able to make thee wise unto salvation, thro' faith which is in Christ Jesus. 2 Tim. iii. 15.—All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works. 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.—See also, Psalm xix. 7. Joshua i. 7, 8. Deut. iv. 2. John v. 39. Mark xii. 24. 2 Peter i. 19.
It is not for the common people to read the Scripture; and if they should, more prejudice than benefit would arise to them from the reading of it.—*Ibid.*	Search ye out the book of the Lord and read. Isa. xxxiv. 16.—Search the Scripture. John v. 39.—The Bereans were more noble than those of Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scripture daily, to know whether these things were so. Acts xvii. 11.—Also, Acts iii. 15. John i. 8. Deut. xvii. 18, 19.
The Church of Rome is infallible, and it belongs to her to judge of the sense of Scripture, so that all persons are bound up to her judgment and definitions.—*Ibid.*	Prove all things, hold fast that which is good. 1 Thess. v. 21.—Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world. 1 John iv. 1.—Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other Gospel unto you, than that which ye have received, let him be accursed. Gal. i. 8.—Also, 1 Peter iii. 15. Matt. vii. 5. 16. xv. 14. &c.
There are other mediators of intercession in heaven besides Je-	There is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the

CHURCH OF ROME.	THE BIBLE.
sus Christ, such as angels and saints, and especially the Virgin Mary, who is the Mother of Mercies and Advocatress of the faithful; and it is good and profitable to invoke them, and to have recourse to their prayers, aid, and help.—*Council of Trent.*	man Christ Jesus. 1 Tim. ii. 5.—I am the way, the truth, and the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by me. John xiv. 16.—If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous. 1 John ii. 2.—with many other texts of the same import.
It is lawful to represent God and the Holy Trinity by images: and these images, and the images and relics of Christ and the saints, are to be duly honoured, venerated, or worshipped, and in this veneration and worship, those are venerated who are represented by them.—*Ibid.* &c.	Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, nor the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth; thou shalt not bow down to them nor worship them. Exod. xx. 4.—Cursed be the man that maketh any graven or molten image. Deut. ii. 7. 15.—We ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold or silver, or stone graven by art and man's device. Acts xvii. 29.—See various passages in the Pentateuch, the Prophets, Romans, &c.
The Clergy may not marry.—Marriage is to them a pollution.—*Ibid.* &c.	Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled. Heb. xiii. 14.—A Bishop must be blameless, the husband of one wife. 1 Tim. iii. 2.—Peter's wife's mother lay sick of a fever. Mark i. 30.—Also, 1 Cor. vii. 2. and ix. 5. 1 Tim. iv. 1, 2, 3. &c.
Men are obliged partly to satisfy the justice of God for their sins, Christ having not by his satisfaction fully answered all. *Ibid.*	The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin. 1 John i. 7.—He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but for the sins of the whole world. 1 John ii. 2.—He hath quickened you together with him, having forgiven you all

CHURCH OF ROME.	THE BIBLE.
	trespasses. Col. ii. 13.—Also, 1 John i. 9. John i. 2. 9. Rev. viii. 33.
That some persons may satisfy over and above what is needful for themselves and their own sins; so that their satisfactions may serve for those that want them, or have not enough of their own.—*Catech. Rom.* And that these are put into the treasury of the Church, to be dispensed by indulgences.—*Decreta de Indulg.*	O Lord! righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of face. Dan. ix. 7.—I am the Lord, and besides me there is no Saviour. Isai. xliii. 11.—Every man shall bear his own burthen. Gal. vi. 7.—The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son. Ezek. viii. 20.
There is a purgatory, or place of punishment for the expiation of the sins of good men, that are not sufficiently purged here. And the souls there detained, are helped by the masses, prayers, alms, and other good works of the living.—*Council of Trent.*	The righteous is taken away from the evil to come, he shall enter into peace. Isa. lvii. 1, 2.—Whilst we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord, and are willing rather to be absent from the body and present with the Lord. 2 Cor. v. 7, 8.—This day shalt thou be with me in paradise. Luke xxiii. 43.—Also, Rev. xiv. 13. John v. 24. 2 Cor. v. 1. &c.
Justification is by charity or righteousness, which is infused and inherent in us.—*Ibid.*	Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Rom. iii. 24r—Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins. And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. Acts xiii. 38, 39.—Also, various passages in the Acts, and in all the Epistles.

CHURCH OF ROME.	THE BIBLE.
Good works of justified persons are truly and properly meritorious and fully worthy of eternal life.—*Ibid.*	The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Rom. vi. 23.—Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us. Titus iii. 14.—When you have done all those things that are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants, we have done that which was our duty to do. See also, Job xxii. 2. Eph. ii. 13.
After the consecration, there remains no more of the substance of the bread and wine in the sacrament, but there is a transubstantiation, or a change of the substance of bread and wine into Christ's body and blood, which are then substantially present, together with his soul and divinity —*Ibid.*	It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life. John vi. 63.—Henceforth we know him no more after the flesh. 2 Cor. v. 16.—For we being many are one bread and one body, for we are partakers of that one bread. 1 Cor. x. 17.
The mass is not only a commemoration of the sacrifice of the cross; but the self-same Christ is therein offered, that offered himself upon the cross; and this sacrifice performed by the priest is truly propitiatory for the remission of sins of the quick and dead.—*Ibid.*	For such an high-priest became us, who needeth not daily, as those high-priests to offer up sacrifice for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once when he offered up himself. Heb. vii. 26, 27.—We are sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Heb. x. 10.—With many other passages in the same Epistle.

The minor doctrines and observances of the Church of Rome will be found equally repugnant to that sacred word, on certain passages of which, (strained to their own purpose,) they

ground their fancied infallibillity. Now we would ask the candid reader, can any thing be more dissimilar than the doctrines contained in the two preceding colums;—can two infallibles be opposed to each other? If the holy Scriptures be infallible, as all who profess the Christian name must acknowledge, what then becomes of the pretended infallibillity of the Church of Rome, and of the doctrines promulgated by the Council of Trent? But to consider the term in the abstract, does it not imply a degree of perfection to which no being can attain but He, "in whose eyes the heavens are not pure, and who chargeth even his angels with folly"? (Job). He, and he alone, possesses infallible power, wisdom, and holiness; and He has been pleased to stamp, in characters of light, those glorious attributes on the pages of his sacred word; which, when enforced by the energies of his Spirit, proves mighty to pull down the strong holds of Satan, to discover the very thoughts and intents of the heart, and to lead the soul into the path of truth and holiness. As far, therefore, as Popes and Councils have departed from this unerring and unchangeable rule of our faith and practice, they have proved themselves to be fallible, and a whole host of fallibles cannot make an infallible.

But, conscious that her new doctrines could not be defended on scripture grounds, the Church of Rome has, in all ages, resorted to other methods to attest her divine origin. Hence the volumes of monkish legends of miracles wrought by the consecrated host, and by the images and pictures of

the saints; many of whom, we are told, have come from the celestial mansions to assure their votaries that they had a powerful interest in their intercessions, and that they might rely upon their favour and protection.

In the following pages will be seen a lamentable picture of the natural consequences of such a system; which substitutes for the manly, rational religion of the gospel, a debasing and degrading superstition. But by these means the church is enriched, and the power of the priesthood increased; every deliverance from sickness and from danger is attributed to the mediation of the patron saint, and the priest receives the votive offering from the grateful convalescent. That the Church of Rome maintains its unchangeable character to the present, is made fully manifest by some recent events in our own country, where the miracles performed through the intercession of St. John Ipomuscene are expected to restore many stray sheep to the fold of the true church. But as it is avowed by some leading prelates of that church, that the Almighty is once more exerting his mighty arm to attest its divine origin, we would, with all humility, express our surprise at the great dissimilarity between our modern miracles and those which were performed by Christ and his Apostles. The latter were not done in a corner, nor liable to any suspicion that the restoration of the sufferers might have been effected by any natural means. The diseases which the Saviour healed by a word or a touch, were generally such as no human aid could mitigate, and

the miracles were attested by the evidence of many disinterested witnesses; so that the multitude were forced to acknowledge, "He doeth all things well—he maketh the blind to see, and the dumb to speak." In the presence of the unbelieving Jews, he said with omnipotent authority, "Lazarus, come forth," and he that was dead four days came forth. In the presence of the terrified mariners he said to the troubled ocean, "Peace, be still," and behold there was a great calm. The five thousand fed by his bounty, witnessed the mighty power exerted by the wonder-working hand of the Son of God. But did our Lord rest the proofs of his divine mission on these alone?—No, they were exhibited in conjunction with the prophecies of the Old Testament, which were fulfilled in our Saviour's person, and in confirmation of the doctrines which he taught. We must therefore say, in the strong language of St. Paul, that though an angel from heaven (and, no doubt, such a being would astonish mortals by his power) should preach any other gospel than that which was taught by Christ and his Apostles, let him be accursed in the estimation of every believer in that gospel. Were the German priest-prince to send forth all the inmates of our hospitals for incurable blind, and lame, and dumb, restored to health and soundness, it might indeed stagger the faith of many Protestants, and cause them to renounce their Bibles, but so long as they believe that the sacred volume is the word of an infallible God, and the depository of whatever is necessary to man's salvation, they will never be persuaded that the Di-

vine Being will delegate to any man the power of working wonders, to establish a system so diametrically opposed to it. Of such attempts to sap the faith of his people, he has graciously forewarned us in the following passages of the divine writings:—"If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or wonder come to pass of which he spake unto thee, saying, 'Let us go after other gods, (which thou hast not known,) and serve them;' thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul." Deut. xiii. 1, 2, 3. "False Christs and false prophets shall arise, and shew great signs and wonders, that (if it were possible) they should deceive the very elect. Behold I have told you before." Matt. xxiv. 24, 25. "And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of all men; and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth, by means of those miracles that he had power to do in sight of the beast." Rev. xiii. 13, 14. The reply of every Bible Christian, when thus assailed by signs of pretended infallibillity, will therefore be, "*To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because they have no light in them.*" Isaiah, viii. 20.

The third main pillar of the Church of Rome is its pretended *catholicity*. This term is one of considerable ambiguity, meaning either its ortho-

doxy or adherence to the true faith of the gospel; its universal charity for all mankind; or as containing within its fold all professing members of the Church of Christ. From the Scripture proofs which have been adduced, we conceive, if the Bible be true, the Church of Rome cannot be Catholic in the first sense of the term; and the extent of its pretensions to the appellation, according to the second meaning, is fully ascertained by the following extracts, from the oath taken by their bishops; "All heretics, schismatics, and rebels against our said lord, (the Pope,) and his successors, I will, to the utmost of my power, persecute and oppose."—"This true Catholic Faith, *out of which there is no salvation*, which at present I freely profess, and sincerely hold, I do promise, vow, and swear, that I will most constantly retain and conserve inviolably, with God's help, unto the last hour of my life."

The third calls for more minute investigation. On this point we can assert, without fear of contradiction, that the Church of Rome never did embrace within its fold all professing Christians; as, even in the zenith of its power and glory, the Greek Church contested the dominion with her. She does not govern, at the present day, even a majority of the Christian world. Of about one thousand millions (the computed population of the earth) little more, alas! than a fifth, as yet, bear the Christian name. Of these by the most accurate calculation, about ninety millions are still adherents of the Church of Rome; seventy millions belong to the various

Reformed Churches, and fifty millions to the Greek Church. It is thus manifest how much Popery has retrograded, since the light of pure religion and true science beamed on a benighted world. The poor Irish peasantry, many of whom can scarcely be persuaded that there are any Protestants in the world except in the British empire, would be greatly surprised to learn, that in point of number they are treading so fast on the heels of their boasted church; and that not more than three-sevenths of the Christian world now acknowledge her authority. And if we carry research further, and inquire into the effects produced on society by the operations of the adverse systems, where shall we look for commercial prosperity, civil peace and domestic enjoyment, enlarged liberality, a philanthropy limited only by the limits of the earth, and an advancement in science and literature which are daily augmenting the corporeal and intellectual happiness of man, but to the Protestant states of Europe and America; while the reverse of the picture will be strikingly exhibited in all those countries which still languish under the yoke of a priestly despotism, so incongruous with the liberty of the gospel and the real good of man. In the astonishing progress of intellect which has marked the last century, what has Italy, or Spain, or Portugal, or Poland contributed to the eliciting and the diffusion of those discoveries which have added so much to the sum of human happiness?—What have they done towards the extension of Christian knowledge, and Christian practice throughout the

world? Being no longer guided by the bright lamp of revelation, and wandering themselves on the mountains of ignorance and superstition, there is no light in them to conduct the steps of the erring Pagan or Mahometan to the fold of Christ. Thanks to Protestantism, whose commanding influence has abolished whips, and tortures, and inquisitions, those sanguinary instruments of conversion in former ages. And in what a degraded state do we find the unfortunate peasantry of those countries, unblessed with the vivifying instructions of the gospel, which not only furnish a solid foundation for man's hopes of future happiness, but promote his present good by exciting in his mind a spirit of useful industry, a laudable love of independence, a thirst for profitable knowledge, and a charity hallowed and unbounded as its source. Let experience decide the question—Where do ignorance and superstition, misery and vice, idleness and want, polluted and revengeful passions most prevail? Is it not in those countries where the operations of the gospel are limited or restrained? Owing to the want of a scriptural education, three-fourths of the population of France have plunged into the gulph of infidelity; and the state of three-fifths of the Irish peasantry, a people by nature frank, generous, brave, and talented, and surrounded with all the rich blessings of soil, and climate, and free institutions, presents a deplorable contrast to that of their better instructed Protestant neighbours.

But a *dernier* resort still remains to the advocates for the catholicity of the Church of Rome,

and to this they appear determined to cling, strengthening their confidence both with prophecies and miracles. Should they be inclined to submit to the powerful evidence of historic truth, that according to the third sense of the term, their church was never catholic, and is less catholic now than ever, they feel assured that the day is not far distant when all opposers are to be swept off the earth, or brought within her pale. If this assurance rests on the probable progress of events, surely the idea is more visionary than even that of the French Revolutionists. Can they draw their *data* either from the past or present course of human affairs? Is it founded on the retrogression of their system within the last century, or the loss of nearly one half of its adherents within the last three centuries? Is it founded on the great diminution of authority which the Popedom has experienced, or on the advancement of civil and religious liberty in every portion of the globe? Is it founded on that immense circulation of the holy Scriptures in almost every language of the earth, which the Church of Rome dreads more than the hostility of kings, and has vainly attempted to retard by the thunders of the Vatican? Or does it rest on the progress of Sunday-school instruction, which, keeping steady pace with her energetic sister-institution, is preparing at home and abroad readers for the Bible, as fast as the Bible can be printed? Or, finally, do they erect their towering expectations on the efforts of Protestant missionaries among the heathen, which, from the signal success already obtained, have

filled the minds of many sincere Christians with the most pleasing anticipations of the future glories of the church? Now we ask, is there any thing in these facts to favour the vain hopes so generally inculcated at present upon the deluded votaries of the Church of Rome? Arguing in the usual mode, from the past to the future, the probabilities are surely against the accomplishment of this mighty revolution in the natural course of events; and were Roman Catholics permitted to read the Bible, and the Reports of the progress of religious institutions amongst the Protestants, with as much freedom as the latter are allowed to peruse the Lives of the Saints or the Scapular, they would soon have views on the subject very different from those which they are taught to entertain.

It would seem, however, that the rock on which they build their expectation of the speedy extinction of Protestantism, that grand consummation of their wishes, is the widely circulated prophecy of Signor Pastorini. He has uttered the awful prediction, and miracles, &c. are to produce the fulfilment! Of these we have already had some specimens; but we think they must rise to a much higher order than those of Prince Hohenlohe before the effect is fully produced. The task of analysing this famous commentary on the Revelations we shall leave to theologians, as we feel quite satified that if the miracles of Prince Hohenlohe were exhibited daily and hourly in every country in Europe, they will never convert a single Protestant who knows his Bible; and we

are equally confident that it would require a miracle, never exceeded but by the general deluge, to sweep the Protestants off the earth.

We have been in the habit of entertaining views of Scripture prophecy, very different from those of Signior Pastorini, and we firmly believe that the whole of it will be ultimately fulfilled in the universal dominion of the Church of Christ. But our opinions respecting the church, no doubt, vary widely from those of that commentator on the book of Revelations. We believe that the church, of whose future glories the ancient prophets spoke in such glowing language, is composed of the living members of Christ's mystical body, "the lively stones of that spiritual building, which, fitly framed together, groweth into an holy temple in the Lord." (Eph. ii. 21). All, of whatever nation or language, or however differing in points of minor importacne, who agree to build on Christ, as the only foundation of their eternal hopes, and accept the precepts of his unerring word, and these exclusively, as their rule of life; they and they alone bear all the marks of the Catholic Church. Their orthodoxy is proved by their trusting for salvation only to the great atonement once offered up for the sins of the whole world, and their steady obedience to the precepts of their divine Master; and they exhibit in all their conduct that prominent mark of genuine Christianity—universal charity for all mankind. Their number may yet indeed be comparatively small, but to them alone can the divine predictions be with consistency referred. Into this fold, of

which, as St. Peter tells us, Christ is the Shepherd and Bishop, shall all those sheep who are now going astray, be brought at length, when they shall all become one fold, under one Shepherd.

The principal object of the present republication is to excite gratitude in the hearts of Protestants for the religious privileges which they enjoy, by laying before them some of the practices of the opposite system of religion in those countries where they are exhibited, without a covering. It was originally dedicated to the Earl of Nottingham, then principal Secretary of State, and first published towards the close of the 17th century, under the title of *The Frauds of Romish Monks and Priests*, when, as at present, Popery was making vigorous efforts to re-establish her ascendancy in the British Islands. The writer was a French secular priest, and in this character he had an opportunity of discovering, during his travels, many of the secret practices of the Romish Church which could not come to the knowledge of a layman. In France, and all other countries, where the population is composed both of Roman Catholics and Protestants, much more piety and decency are observable in the clergy of the former communion, than in places where Popery is the exclusive mode of worship. The contrast which the author witnessed in these particulars, during his journey through Italy, where it reigns without restraint, so powerfully operated upon his mind as to induce him to entirely abandon a system by which the religion of the gospel had been so degraded. That very little, if any change for the better, has yet

taken place in that benighted country, is amply confirmed by the testimony of more recent writers, of both persuasions. Love of gain, the *esprit du corps*, and a blind obedience to the Papal See, render the Romish Clergy, to the present, the willing instruments of a system of delusion, in which their own interest is so deeply concerned; while their unhappy votaries, being still kept in total ignorance of the holy Scriptures, amuse themselves through life with a religion of shew and pageantry; and, at its close, istead of depending wholly on the all-prevailing merits of the Redeemer of the world for admission to the mansions of rest, fix their hopes on the intercession of the patron saint, and the prayers of those pastors, to whom, with an implicit faith, they have committed the keeping of their souls. The deliverance of the Roman Catholics, both priests and people, from this state of spiritual bondage, and intellectual degradation, by the arguments which Scripture and enligtened reason furnish, should be the first wish of every Christian philanthropist. Then, and not till then, shall religious discord cease, and genuine Christianity, diffusing its mild influence through every part of the world, change it from a theatre ot tyranny, desolation, and strife, into the abode of freedom, prosperity, and peace.

LETTER I.

Introduction.— Relics.— Miraculous Spring of St. Reine.— Odoriferous Relics of St. Victor.—Miracle-working Image of the Blessed Virgin at Dijon.—Picture of the Virgin at Talent, said to have been painted by St. Luke.—Abbey of Citeaux.—The Great Chartreux.—Story of St. Bruno.

YOU have not forgot, Sir, that in the last conversation we had together in France upon the account of religion, I made you acknowledge, that the Protestant religion was more suitable to reason than the Romish, which you profess. It is true, that by an evasion more subtile than solid, you was pleased to call that reason, *human reason*, supported by sense, which, you said, was the rock on which the purity of faith commonly splits and suffers shipwreck; and that you desired faith to be the foundation of your religion, with exclusion of every thing else; and as you (with your divines) freely owned an hundred several miracles in transubstantiation, you were pleased to tell me, that that was a mystery of faith, which ought rather to be humbly adored than rashly pryed into. Whereupon, when I took the liberty to tell you, that in the mean time, forasmuch as my reason was given me by God, to make use of it in searching out the truth, I could not but think it hard to reject the light it offers, seeing that without it I was like one, who being fallen into a deep water, and finding no bottom to foot upon, is drowned and lost. You replied, that if I inclined to follow reason, you would soon furnish me with guides able to satisfy an honest mind; and that I needed

only to cast my eye on so many learned men, both Monks and Priests, who are the light of the world, the main props and pillars of the church—who by the integrity of their life, and the purity of their doctrine, uphold the temple of God here upon earth:—that it was morally impossible so many learned men should all of them be involved in error; and that the agreeing consent of so many excellent spirits, appeared to you a sufficiently firm foundation to establish and fix a reasonable mind.—You proceed to speak to me with earnestness of the modesty which becomes those who have only a mean capacity; which, you know, I was so far from being offended at, that on the contrary, as being better than any one else acquainted with my own mediocrity, I thanked you for your advice; adding, that how useful otherwise it might be, yet ought it not to stop me in my search after truth. And forasmuch as some time after, partly out of devotion, and partly out of curiosity, I happened to undertake a voyage into Italy; and upon that occasion calling to mind, how in my scruples about religion you had referred me to your Priests and Monks, I made it my business, more than otherwise I would have done, to examine their life and conduct, to try whether I could find them a sufficient and rational foundation, as you assert, to assure and confirm a person who already began to doubt the truth of your principles. And it seems, indeed, that God took a particular care to dispose all things toward my full and satisfactory information herein, during the whole course of my travels.

At my setting forth from Paris, I associated myself with a Benedictine Monk of a reformed congregation, a man of sufficient learning, and whose wit and other good qualities had so far recommended him to the religious of his order, as to send him a second time in quality of their Procurator and So-

licitor General to the court of Rome. We took our way through the country of Brie, and so through Burgundy; and upon the road we called at several monasteries of his order, where we were received and treated very civilly, and where I had an opportunity of making some observations, which I thought not unworthy of your knowledge; and therefore have made them the subject of this Letter; after which, I intend with the first occasion, in case I find, Sir, that these prove welcome to you, to impart some other matters I have observed since my entering into Italy.

We arrived the 13th of July, at a little town on the confines of the country of Auxerre, called Flavigny. It is a place of little consideration at present, though very famous by reason of a pilgrimage which has been continued there a long time since, in honour of a certain saint called Reine, and very infamous for the contests and impostures which were in their vigour when we passed that way. The history in short is this: An holy woman named Reine, suffered martyrdom near Alise, a little village a league distant from Flavigny; and the ground of that country generally abounding with mineral waters, some considerable time after the Monks of Flavigny made a search for the body of this saint, and informed the people, that when she was beheaded, at the very place where her head lighted on the ground, a spring (known by experience to be much conducing to the healing of the sick,) bubbled up at that very instant, for a perpetual miracle, in witness of God's approbation of the confession of faith made by his handmaid. This error being afterwards carried on for many ages in the minds of the people, and become the more incurable for its long standing, it happened some years since that the Fathers Cordeliers, who are religious of the order of St. Francis, a sort of people subtle and very crafty, obtained leave of

the bishop of the place, to build a chapel about the said spring, whereof they took possession, to the great regret of the monks of the order of St. Bennet, who had been all along the ancient and peaceable possessors of all the relics of St. Reine ; who soon found how dangerous it was to have such sly fellows for their neighbours ; and the false step they had made, in neglecting to make themselves masters of a spring of water so fruitful in blessings, and which was not above a league distant from their monastery. Indeed the Cordeliers knew much better to improve this advantage, than the Benedictins had done ; insomuch that the devotion very sensibly increased in a short time to the considerable profit of these good fellows, who not contenting themselves with being the masters of the miraculous spring, but resolving to draw to themselves the entire devotion of that Pilgrimage, they pretended to have a considerable part of the body of that saint ; and accordingly they exposed to public view, as they pretended, a whole arm of her ; by which means, within less than a league's space, the monstrous sight was to be seen of a saint with three arms, to the great astonishment and scandal of the people thereabouts, and of an infinite number of travellers and pilgrims, who resort thither from all parts.— I could, Sir, have heartily wished you present, when the father (guardian of that convent) who took the pains himself to shew us the fair buildings and gardens, which were the product of the monies brought in by that devotion, entered upon the discourse of his pretended relic, which he had the impudence to shew us ; for I assure myself, you would have soon recovered of the too favourable opinion you have conceived for this kind of men. He protested, not without a horrid blasphemy, that for his part, he did not more firmly believe the mystery of the Holy Trinity, than he was convinced of the truth of his relic ; notwithstanding

that the bishop of the place had absolutely forbid them, to expose it any more to public view.

It would be too ridiculous to give you a relation of the way and manner by which he assured us this arm had been found by them, so far as to mingle with it the revelations of his brethren the Cordeliers, and the ministry of angels, which is the ordinary way made use of by the Church of Rome, for introducing and authorizing their superstitious worship. The only reflection I desire you to make on this occasion, is, that certainly it is a pitiful and lamentable thing, to see that the Roman Catholics, who do not want men of wit and parts amongst them, are yet so obstinate, that they will not be disabused, notwithstanding they see every day many things sufficient to withdraw them from their error: so that we have reason to believe, that by a just judgment of God, because they render to saints a worship that is only due to God, they are suffered to give the same to those things, which in their own consciences do not deserve it. The most part of their divines maintain, that when a devotion is once set on foot, notwithstanding that the subject in which it terminates should be afterwards found to be false and superstitious, and so unworthy of such worship; yet that in conscience the course of it ought not to be stopt: because (say they) the scandal which by this means must needs be occasioned, would be a much greater evil, than that which we design to take away; and because the simplicity of a deluded people, whose intention is always right and pure, is much more pleasing to God, than a too great cautiousness and fear of being deceived, which might in the end engage them to call in question all manner of relics and miracles, which they look upon as a very great evil. But the naked truth is, this would give a great stroke towards the diminishing of their temporal profits, there being never a pilgrimage which does not afford them very considerable ones

by the infinite number of prayers and masses, which are there procured, and are all rated at a very high price.

I can give you on this subject a result of a conference, at which I was present myself, some time ago, at Blois in France, upon occasion of several relics kept in the parish of St. Victor, two leagues distant from that city. These relics were much out of order, in old wooden cases, all worm-eaten and rotten with age, which hindred them from being carried in procession, and exposed to public view. The concern, therefore, was to have them more modishly accommodated, and transported into new cases. To this end, the bishop of Chartres was petitioned to peform the translation, who presently sent his order to the Archdeacon of Blois for that purpose; who assembled several of the clergy, to consult with the curate and priests of St. Victor, about the precautions to be observed in that translation. This done, they proceeded to the opening of the cases; and the truth is, bones, either of saints, or no saints, were found in them. In the mean time, a monk of the abbey of St. Lomer, in Blois, who was present, cried out at the very instant, that he smelt a very sweet odour which proceeded from them, wherewith he was so strongly seized, that it was like to overcome him. A young religious (his companion) seconded him immediately, and some country people of the parish protested the very same thing. The archdeacon, and rest of the company freely declared, that they smelt nothing. Yet, forasmuch as it might be, that those persons having some more particular merit before God, he might think them worthy of receiving the like favours; it was ordered, that their attestations should be received, and set in the margin of the verbal process, which was then making of that translation; the original whereof was to be shut up with the relics in the new cases.

I had the curiosity, some weeks after, in the time of vintage, to examine some of these persons about the odour they pretended to have smelt, of what kind it was; whereupon some of them said it was the scent of a rose, others of jessamin, and others of a violet; but finding that they faultered in their expressions, and smiled withal, I took occasion to press them more seriously, so that at the upshot they confessed, that the good opinion they had of the two monks, who first started the matter, had drawn them in, and in a manner forced their imagination to make them believe, that they smelt that, which they never had smelt indeed. This ingenuous confession of theirs, made me to seek an opportunity to discourse these two monks; I went to see the youngest of them, and after I had given him two or three visits of civility, to encrease our familiarity, I obtained leave of his superior for him, to accompany me to a country house, where, after friendly entertainment given him, I put him upon the matter of the relics of St. Victor. The young monk, overcome by my kindness, assured me he would open his heart to me, as to his own brother, that the truth was, he had not smelt any such miraculous odour, which he then attested, but that, partly that he might not contradict his companion, and partly by a sudden shame that surprised him, lest he should not seem to be as much graced with heavenly favours as his brother, had made him to depose against his conscience, for which afterwards he was somewhat troubled. But, father, (said I) how can you be at peace, without unsaying again, what you so openly averred and deposed, and this in honour of truth? The devil is the father of lies, and you cannot pretend to the quality of a child of God, without destroying the work of the devil, whereof yourself have been the instrument. He answered, that he had

consulted with his superiors about the matter, and that the general rule they had given him, to pass over scruples of that nature was, to consider whether the thing undertaken, or exerted into act, were opposite to the glory of God, or the good and advantage of his order. That it was not against the glory of God, to advance the honour of one of his saints; especially when some circumstances, that were both glorious and profitable to that order, engaged the doing of it; and that all the evil that could be supposed in the case came but to this, to say, that God had done what he might have done, and which he hath done on many other occasions; which at the highest could be no more than a small venial sin; as (they say) all lies are, that do not infringe justice; that is to say, that do no body any harm.

Having thus got this truth out of him; I had no more to do now, but to convince the old monk, which it was not possible for me to do, for he continually persisted in asserting the truth of what he had deposed, aye, and much more; for he added, that the odour had followed him every where, as long as the least dust of those sacred relics was left upon his clothes. In the mean time, this did not hinder me from considering, that all the credibility of this miracle was now reduced to the conscience of one single person; upon whom the affirmations of all the other deponents rested, and that whenever these cases should chance again to be opened, in which the verbal process was shut up, (as superstition is used to get strength by length of time,) this miracle would come to be believed with as much assurance, as a great many other most false and ridiculous ones are in the Church of Rome. I was the more willing, Sir, to represent this to your consideration, as being a thing that happened in your own neighbourhood, and whereof

you may fully inform yourself, whensoever you please; that so finding the faithfulness of my relation in this particular, you may be the more disposed to give credit to what I shall write to you concerning foreign countries. I return now to my voyage.

From Flavigny we went to Dijon, the metropolis of the duchy of Burgundy, where I was eye-witness of a horrid cheat, practised by the men of the church; I do not relate this passage to you so much for its own sake, but to the end you may make the reflection upon it, of great importance to our present subject. We took a walk to the holy chapel, where they shewed us many relics, that were indeed very ridiculous; and amongst the rest, that which they call the holy host or wafer, from whence they tell us, blood issued in great abundance, after that a Protestant had in several places stabbed it with a knife; that upon his so doing the wafer was changed into an infant, and from an infant to a wafer again, as it was before. Whereupon entering into discourse, at last we were insensibly led to this question, How it came to pass, that at present there were not so many miracles to be seen, as in former times? In answer to which, the canon, who shewed us the relics, told us, that in the abbey of St. Benignus, in the same city, there were almost every day miracles wrought at an altar of the blessed Virgin, where still born children were restored to life for some moments, till they could be made partakers of the sacrament of baptism; which was looked upon as a very great happiness for them, forasmuch as according to the opinion of the Church of Rome, infants dying in that manner, cannot be saved by the faith of their parents, but go down to a dark place they call *Limbus*, which is made express for them, and where they are to continue for ever, without suffering the punishment of sense,

because they have never sinned by the inducement of the senses; but where, notwithstanding, they must undergo *Pœnam Damni* or the punishment of loss, which consists in the privation of the beatific vision, that being a punishment due to original sin. We cannot imagine that any fathers or mothers should be so pitiless and unnatural, as rather to desire to spare their money, than to rescue their children from so deplorable a condition, by having prayers and masses said for them at the said altar: so that this was the trade driven by the religious of that abbey. We went therefore about ten o'clock in the morning to that church, where we saw the miraculous image of the Virgin, commonly called the Little, or Lady of St. Benignus, and two still-born children, who had already lain there two days, being black and livid, and very noisome. The parents, who were of the best families of Dijon, had during these two days procured above two hundred masses to be said in that church, at a crown a piece, in order to obtain from God, by intercession of the said image, and by the prayers of the religious of that abbey, so much life for these poor infants, as might be sufficient for them, only to receive the sacrament of baptism. The monks would very gladly have deferred their resurrection for a day longer, but the bodies were already so far corrupted, that it was almost impossible to abide in the church, by reason of the offensiveness of the stench that came from them: so that as it happened we came in the very nick of time, to see the performance of it. Towards noon, which was the time of the last mass, a young friar, who served at the altar, going to carry the mass-book to that side where the gospel is read, hit with his arm, either wittingly or by chance, the table of the altar, upon which the still-born infants were laid, which made them move. The priest who was saying mass, and who probably was acquainted with the

hour and moment of this interlude, immediately breaking off his sacred mystery (as the Papists please to express it) pronounced with a loud voice the sacramental words over the infants, *baptizo, &c.* casting in the mean time on their bodies the water, wherewith he had washed his hands. My eyes could not deceive me in a case I had so plainly discerned, and I could with all my heart have undertaken to undeceive the people; but that I knew how dangerous it is, to oppose the blind rabble, kept and entertained in error by priests and monks, who knowing no other God but their own interest, would soon have stirred them up, under the pretence of heresy or incredulity, to have torn me to pieces. However, I could not refrain from hinting a word of it in particular to some persons, who were present at that action, and who owned they had observed the same thing. Burgundy was always a country fruitful in superstition, and we may see the signs of it every where; and consequently also, there be very few countries where the priests and monks thrive better, or more abound in riches. I beg you now, Sir, only make this observation, that the fathers of the abbey, are the reformed religious of the order of St. Bennet, and consequently of a congregation which you in France have the greatest veneration for, as well upon the account of their learning, as duty; both which, as you have told me, render them equally recommenable. If then, say I, these men, who are so holy and so virtuous in your opinion, are so able and cunning to deceive, and such profligate lovers of outward gain; what may we not expect from so many non-reformed religious, who live so licentiously and loosely to the very eye, as to make open profession of trepanning laymen by a thousand kind of artifices, to have wherewith to maintain their flagitious and scandalous debaucheries?

We staid some days at Dijon, where I was eye-witness to an abundance of ridiculous devotions,

that are in vogue there, and which would be too tedious to relate to you; as that of our Lady of l'Estan, that of St. Bernard, and of the image of the Virgin kept at Talent, and pretended to have been painted by St. Luke, and to be very miraculous. But forasmuch as the devotion paid to these sorts of images, is used to increase or decrease, according as priests or monks do more or less dexterously manage them; this last-mentioned has suffered very much, being well nigh fallen into contempt, insomuch as the curate of that parish, despaired almost of ever bringing it into request again. To bring this about, he told us, he knew but one way, which was to publish a miracle which lately happened about that image, which was a more remarkable one than all the cures it daily performed. The case is this, said he, having perceived about ten years ago, that the devotion to the image daily decreased, I began to enquire into the cause of it, and finding the picture to be in a very rueful condition, by reason of the moistness of the place, which had well nigh rotted the cloth, and the rats also having made bold with some part of it, and extremely disfigured the face especially; I conceived that this might be the reason of the abatement of the people's devotion. Wherefore to remedy this, I made the old cloth to be pasted upon a new one, and sent for one of the best painters of Dijon to draw over the defective places of it, which was accordingly done with a great deal of care and exactness; and on a first Sunday of the month, the image thus drawn over and embellished, was set up in its former place with a great deal of solemnity, and a great concourse of people. Since which time, proceeded he, I have been continually troubled with the gout; and moreover, the blessed Virgin to shew herself displeased, that any painter should be so bold as to put his hand to a piece of work which her servant St. Luke had left to pos-

terity, in order to the restoring of it to its first lustre; she has some days since made the colours that had been superadded to it, to scale away and fall down, and thereby reduced the image to the pitiful estate it was in before; which however she is much more pleased with, than to see her portraiture profaned with strange colours. He added, that he had already caused the relation of the miracle to be printed, and that he did intend to send copies of it to all neighbouring, yea, even into foreign countries; and that he looked upon this as a probable way, to recall the devotion of people to his church. I had occasion, Sir, to remind myself of this passage, during my Italian voyage; for being at Bononia, they shewed me an excellent piece of Caratche in fresce, upon the walls of the cloister of the abbey of St. Michael in Bosco; which being extremely injured by all-devouring time, had moved the compassion of Guido Rhin, another famous Italian painter, who so dexterously mended the defects thereof, as in a manner to restore it to its former beauty; but yet we find that the new paint, laid upon the first colours, falls down in scales, and that without a miracle too; there being nothing more natural and obvious, than that new colours, cannot so well incorporate with old paint, as fresh colours do with one another. But notwithstanding the obviousness hereof, when superstition has once gained the ascendent of a man's spirit, she doth so strangely preposess the same, that there is nothing so common and ordinary, but appears to them miraculous.

I have seen several other images of the Blessed Virgin in Italy, which they say were all painted by the same St. Luke, and are consequently reputed miraculous, particularly that of St. Mary the Greater in Rome; but in truth they are so very different from one another, that it is impossible they should have been painted by the same hand,

or that all of them should be the pictures of the Blessed Virgin, the lineaments, figure and proportion of the face and body, vastly varying from one another. I shall give you a more particular account of them, in my observations of Italy.

But before I have done with this city, I must not forget to entertain you a while with a famous nest of monks four leagues distant from it; I mean the famous abbey of Citeaux, the abbot of which, as you know, is the chief and general of the whole order, which without doubt is one of the vastest bodies of religious, the Church of Rome can boast of; France, Italy, Spain, Poland and Portugal being thronged with the monasteries of that order, who all of them own this abbey of the Citeaux for their mother. I had very particular acquaintance with the prior of the monastery, who was a young man of the city of Orleans, who invited me to come and see him. The abbot sent two of his coaches, with six horses, to fetch some of his relations, whom he had invited to dine with him, and with whom I had the honour to join myself. All the discourse we had on the way from Dijon thither, was about the tragical end of Monsieur Bourré, a gentleman born of one of the most noble families of Dijon, and a religious of that order, who a little before had been publicly executed at Dijon for poisoning his abbot, because he went about to make an enquiry into his crimes; the fact being evident that he had debauched some of the nuns of a monastery, whither the abbot had sent him in quality of their director or confessor. As soon as we were come near to the Citeaux, I could not but admire the stately avenues of that magnificent abbey. This place which formerly was nothing but a horrid wilderness, when St. Robert, the first abbot of that order, did institute it, is now at present by the voluptuousness and luxury of the monks, become an earthly paradise, abounding

with all manner of delights. The history tells us, that that abbot, being a lover of silence and solitude, retired himself, with some of his disciples into these parts, which at that time was nothing else but a thick wood, and lying out of the way of almost all human converse. Here it was they began to build themselves cells, with the branches of trees; and some amongst them digged themselves caves underground, without either art or form, like to the dens of ravenous beasts. The herbs and roots that grew in the wood, served them indifferently, without distinguishing the good from the bad, for nourishment; and all the precaution they used was this, that after they had boiled them, they first gave some of them to a dog, or other domestic animal, which if it did not immediately die, or appear distempered, they took it for granted, that there were no poisonous herbs in their cookery, whose dangerous effects they had reason to apprehend. But how prodigious a change appeared in that place not long after! The people round about being informed of the astonishing severities, and strange way of living of these anchorites, came flocking from all parts to admire them, and returning to their homes, published every where that in the wood *de Citeaux*, they had in their days seen somewhat more and greater than either Elias or St. John the Baptist. And as in that age of the world people were much more compassionate and tender than they are at present towards persons who for the love of God, as they express it, had left all, they made it their business, from all parts to carry them not only food, but other conveniencies of life. These good hermits contented themselves for some time, to accept of some of the coarsest and meanest of their supplies; and afterwards by little and little the most exquisite and delicate, receiving them as by an express order from God, by attributing to them-

selves the promise of Jesus Christ, made to his apostles, that having forsaken all for His sake, they should receive in this world an hundred fold, and in the world to come eternal life. Thus within a short time, from a life of extraordinary rigour and abstinence, and most signal and remarkable piety, they chopt about, to a life as scandalous and dissolute; and whereof St. Bernard in his time began already highly to complain, but at present is advanced to a far more transcendent degree of excess. Instead of a desert and solitude, as it was before in the highest degree, they have now made it a kind of a city; which within its compass entertains all manner of handicrafts-men, who live there with their wives and all their families: instead of that mean and spare diet, to which they were obliged by a solemn vow, made at the foot of their altars, and in particular of abstaining from flesh all the days of their life, they have at present, directly contrary to their vows, introduced the use of it to the highest degree of delicacy, as being always accompanied with the agreeable variety of herbs and fish. And, for my part, I can truly aver, that for the two days that I staid there, their tables (besides their common viands) were covered with several dishes of venison, followed by a service of fish, the sides of the dishes being garnished with the tongues and roes of carps, and the tails of crabs. Yea, the abbot had sent to Dieppe, which is about a hundred and twenty leagues distant, at an excessive charge, and by a post sent express, who ran day and night, for soles, which were fresh enough, and so costly a rarity, that the intendants and presidents of the parliament of Dijon, durst not venture upon them in their most sumptuous entertainments. The monks of this abbey, in the mean time, glorying in this excess, which ought rather to have confounded them, vaunted with an unparalleled

impudence, that in all that province there was not a man besides the abbot of Citeaux, who could bear such an expense, and continue it every day.

After dinner, the abbot, (followed by many of his officers, and a great number of the lacqueys in livery) went himself to shew us the new buildings he was then making in his abbey, and which consisted of four great piles of buildings, of a magnificent structure, all of hewn stone, of a diamond cut, designed for the separate lodging of the four principal abbots of the order, with all their train, at the time of their general chapters. A fifth building, which he intended for his own person, was a lofty palace, lifting up its proud head above the other four buildings, as it were to overlook and command them, to represent the authority he had over the other abbots, in quality of their general.

After we had taken a view of these magnificent structures, we were led into the old buildings. Here it was that a fair opportunity was given me, to take notice of the subtilty and artifices of the monks, still to continue laics, if possible, in the high esteem of their monastery and persons. In order whereunto they shew to those who visit them, a great quantity of relics, and places of devotion, as they call them; upon their entering into which, they use frequent bowings of their bodies, and kneelings, repeating some prayers, besides some gests and cutting of faces, wherein they oblige the company to imitate them. This done, they fill your ears with the recital of old stories and miracles of the days of yore, wrought in favour of their order. Amongst which, they never forget to inculcate the tragedy of some usurper of the revenues of their monastery, or of some other that spoke ill of the same, who at the upshot of the story doth never fail of being struck

from God with sudden death by a thunderbolt, or of having his neck broke by some devil or other. I have since observed, the same inveigling tricks in almost all the monasteries and convents of Italy, and in all other places frequented upon the score of devotion. They shewed us a large refectory of the first religious of their order, which is a vaulted room, and very long, more resembling a hideous cave, than a place to eat in. And yet, (said one of the religious) this is that holy grotto where our ancient fathers, the blessed founders of our order, met together every day after sun-set, wearied with their handy labour, after having sung the praises of God, to partake together of a piece of black coarse bread, with some boiled pulse or roots, without either salt or butter, or any other sauce or dressing, and in so small a quantity, as designing rather to keep themselves from starving, than to make them strong and lively; and continually practising those severe mortifications, which we can sooner admire than imitate. These great and heroic saints, are now in heaven, and have changed their astonishing severities, with the eternal delights of the wedding supper of the Lamb; and it is from that high station, they, with a favorable eye look down upon those who live, or have lived for some time in this monastery, as likewise upon those who are or have been benefactors to it; and we are assured by revelation, that none of them, nay, though they may have lived a most abominable life, shall ever die in mortal sin. A counsellor of Dijon, who was there present with us, said smiling, that he wanted but very little of being persuaded to leave all he had to the monastery; and gently pushing my arm, asked me, whether I was not well pleased to hear a fat and burly monk, after having so well dined, discoursing of the abstinence and

penance of those ancient fathers, and of the blessings God hath in store for his abbey, too, upon their account, with so much energy? But after all, the plain truth is, that it is nothing but an artifice they make use of, to strike the spirits of men with some kind of veneration for their orders and persons.

From this place they led us to another, which they called the old chapter house, which is a building after the Gothic way, with many rows of pillars like a church, yet stately enough. The stones of the pavement are cut into letters, which make up all the Psalms of David; and near the midst of this place they shewed us a large stone, on which, of old, they were used to lay the religious of the monastery some hours before their departure; where they were exposed all naked upon ashes and hair-cloth, until they breathed their last. But this custom, (said the father,) has since been abolished, because it was found by experience, that some of those who were so exposed, having more strength left than was imagined, continued some time in that condition, exposed to the violence of cold for twenty-four hours, or more, before they died; so as those who thus exposed them, questioned whether in so doing they had not been their murderers. At the present, (said he smiling,) the case is altered, and we die softly on the feathers, after having essayed whatsoever the art of medicine can afford for our recovery, and which is every whit as meritorious to us, as that pitiless rigour our predecessors were obliged to, forasmuch as herein we submit our wills to those who command us, and whom we are obliged to obey; obedience even in pleasing and agreeable things, being more acceptable to God than all sacrifices. Thus, gallantly, the father excused the decay of their observance, endeavouring to make that seem a virtue, which,

indeed, is nothing else but an effect of their softness and effeminacy. Or rather, we may say, that by a just judgment of God, these kind of men having rashly vowed, what was not in their power to perform, are fallen by so much lower, by how much they aspired to fly higher. It is upon this account that we see so many reformations of these religious orders, and soon after, other reformations of them again, who, in a short time, will stand in need still of another reformation. But that which is the strangest thing of all is, that they fall into prodigious corruptions, and into those habits of sinning, which strike the most worldly men that are, with horror, as may be seen from the hint I give of Monsieur Bourré, monk of that order, and many other examples, that fill the world with their report.

There is but one only religious order in the Church of Rome, that can boast of its antiquity, and of having never been reformed, which is that of the Chartreux. Having stayed two days at Citeaux, we took our way through Lionnois, and Dauphinè, and finding ourselves not far from the monastery called the Great Chartreux, our curiosity invited us to take a view of it. This monastery is the chief head of all those of the order of Chartreux, and in it their general chapters are held. St. Bruno, who was the founder of this order, retired hither with his companions in the year of our Lord 1080. What is commonly related as the reason of his retirement, is rather a fable than a history; which, notwithstanding, is maintained by a great deal of heat, as a great truth by the fathers of this order, who have caused the story to be painted at large, and hung up in their cloisters; but on the other hand, it is denied by the doctors of the famous university of Paris. This fable tells us, that Bruno, who had a long time frequented that university, being present at

the interment of a doctor, who had been a member of the same, a person of an irreproachable life, to outward view, and who died with the odour of sanctity; when the office for the dead was reciting in the church for him, and that they were come to those words of the lesson, *responde mihi, quantas habeo iniquitates;* answer me, how many sins I have? The dead body raised himself on the bier, and sitting upright, with a terrible voice, pronounced these words—*Accusatus sum;* I am accused: at which astonishing accident, when all that were present were extremely amazed, it was thought fit to put off the obsequies till the next day; at which time they began again the office for the dead, and when they were come to the same words—*responde mihi*, &c., the dead answered with a tone much more terrible than at first, these two words more—*judicatus sum;* I am judged; which increasing the horror and amazement of all those that were present, made them resolve to delay the burial one day longer; at which time, a vast crowd of people being assembled, the office was begun again, and at the same words, the dead raising himself the third and last time, said with a pitiful and mournful accent—*condemnatus sum;* that he was condemned to hell without recovery. This, so strange and terrible a spectacle, (saith the fable,) had that effect on the spirit of Bruno, that from that instant he resolved to quit the world, and to retire into some solitary place, for to live there wholly to God, solitary and separate from the view of the world; and by his persuasion, engaged seven students of the university of Paris, his companions, with him in the same resolution; who, being all of one mind, went and cast themselves at the feet of the bishop of Grenoble, to beg of him the desert called Chartreuse, which belonged to him; and having obtained their request, they retired there, and built themselves cells.

The truth of the matter is, that this saint did indeed retire with his companions into this place; but all the story of the doctor is evidently false, as has been incontestibly proved by the doctors of the university of Paris; there being none of the contemporary writers, or any that were two hundred years after, that make the least mention of it; and is, indeed, nothing else but an invention of the Papists, very fit to be joined with the rest of their stories, concerning the apparition of souls in purgatory.

Probably, Sir, your curiosity will incline you to desire, I should give you a description of this place, and its situation, which, without doubt, is the most desert place that nature could form; and yet, notwithstanding, is at this day become a very pleasant seat, by means of the immense expenses which these fathers, who are extremely rich, have been at, to make it more pleasing to sense. Wherefore, Sir, I shall endeavour, in order to your satisfaction, to set down what comes to my mind concerning it. This desert, called Chartreuse, which has given the name to the order that is thence denominated, is a place situate in the bosom of an exceeding high mountain, the top of which parts itself into four others, leaving in the midst of them a place of a mile in length, and above a quarter of a mile in breadth, in which space the cells of these fathers are built. The waters gushing forth from these mountains, make a most impetuous torrent, which bears the name of St. Lawrence. This was a place altogether unfrequented, and almost inaccessible, when St. Bruno first retired thither, though at present by a vast profusion of money, the religious of the place have made the access to it not only easy, but pleasant, having cut out large steps in the rock, and by that means made (as it were) many stairs to get up to it. However, such

is the situation of the place, that neither coaches nor carts, no, nor horses neither, can come up to it; but they make use of mules, accustomed from their youth to go up and down those steps, to convey their provisions to them. We got up to the place by means of the same conveniencies, and found the snow in several places lying still on the eminences of the rocks, notwithstanding that it was in the midst of August; and that at the foot of the mountain, the heat was almost insupportable.

The building of the monastery was not quite finished when we arrived there, having been reduced to ashes some short time before. There was a suspicion, that the religious themselves had been the incendiaries, because their cells displeased them, as being too mean and old fashioned; and besides, too much pinched of room, so that they could not enjoy themselves in them with that ease and convenience they desired. It happened at a time when the wind extremely favoured their design, and the fire began in a quarter where so much combustible matter was lodged, and so far from the places where any fires were made, that it was easy to judge, that it was not a thing happened by accident, but contrived on purpose. Besides, the delays and indifferency shewed in quenching of it, gave a sufficient testimony, that the friars desired nothing more, than to see it (with all expedition) burned down to the ground. Yea, some have averred it for a certain truth, that the news of it was known many days before in foreign countries, which was related to us by one of the fathers of that society for a miracle, saying, that without doubt the tutelary angel of the place, foreseeing what was to happen to it, had communicated the knowledge of it to so far distant countries. But not to insist on this any longer, certain it is, that the whole building was reduced to ashes, and in less than six months, in a manner

quite rebuilt again ; a good part of the materials having been prepared before hand, as it were by a divine Providence, as the said father exprest himself, in places adjacent to the mountain. It is to be noted, that their general chapter having some veneration for those ancient buildings of their first fathers, and to prevent laymen from taxing them with niceness and luxury, had refused them their permission to build. But what is capable to restrain the longing monks, whenas by direct or indirect means, by hook or by crook, they are in a condition to effect it? In a word, these new buildings were brought to perfection, with a magnificence very unbeseeming the modesty of hermits, and more becoming the palace of a king, than the cells of such who pretended to have forsaken the world. There remained only one building at the foot of the mountain yet unfinished, being designed for the officers of the Chartreuse, and which was already far advanced. As for the manner of living, I must acknowledge, they still retain something of their first institution, as in particular their abstinence from flesh ; but the diversity and abundance of fish, herbs, eggs, and other such like things wherewith they are served, is far more pleasing and agreeable to sense, than any sort of flesh meat, and much more costly. The father purveyor of the house, assured us, that the expense of every religious amounted at the least to five hundred crowns a year. They have a way of extracting the substance, and as it were the quintessence, from several great fishes, whereof they make jelly-broths, that are extremely nourishing. Their bread is of an extraordinary whiteness, and the best wine that can be got for love or money, is afforded them without measure. Besides this, every religious has in his own apartment a reservatory, stored with fruit and other necessaries, so that they may eat and drink

whenever they please, and entertain their friends that come to visit them, to charm the irksomeness of their solitude.

Every Chartreux has his separate apartment, which consists of five or six fair rooms, very neatly furnished and adorned, with a neat garden, which separates one apartment from another; all which gardens have a door that opens into the cloister, which is of a prodigious length, and of a most sumptuous and magnificent structure, insomuch as it doth not seem so much contrived for the convenience of the several cells, as for the embellishment and ornament of the place. The great company of strangers, who come thither from all parts, either out of curiosity or devotion, some about business, others to visit some of their friends or kindred, has changed this solitude into a place of great concourse, and consequently made it appear less hideous to nature; and particularly in summer-time many persons of quality retire thither, there to enjoy the deliciousness of the place, and the cool air of the mountain. These fathers, to engage the frequent visits of others, and to draw thither their kindred and friends, have established hospitality in the monastery, and entertain every one that comes, according to his quality, both person and attendants, without costing them a farthing; and a man may stay there many days, according as they find his company either pleasing or profitable. That part where they entertain strangers, is a most stately and sumptuous building, containing apartments for persons of quality of all ranks and degrees. The chief officer of the kitchen knows what kind of entertainment is suitable to each chamber, which is very exactly observed. By this we may guess at the immense riches of these fathers. You would be astonished, to see that these anchorets, whose first institutor, St. Bruno, shewed himself to be

so great a lover of poverty, retirement, and silence, are now by succession of times, mounted to so high a degree of riches and grandeur, as to be able to change their desert, of itself so solitary and inaccessible, into a well inhabited country, and more frequented than the great roads that lead to great and capital cities. They boast, that they have never been reformed since their first institution; but in good earnest, Sir, think you not after all this, that they stand in need of a sound reformation? We may conclude from hence, that all those great efforts which are made to surmount nature, which cannot subsist without a most particular grace and assistance from God, which he vouchsafes to whom it pleaseth him, when we will unadvisedly appropriate the same, and rashly make profession of them, and tie ourselves up to them by vows, do commonly end in shameful weaknesses; which discover that they were rather artifices of the devil, to lift up the heart of man, in order to his greater fall, than the motions of grace, which are wont to humble and abase the soul, in order to give it the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil.

After this, as it were to cast dust in our eyes, and to divert us from making any reflection upon such extravagant disorders, they led us to the chapel of St. Bruno, which is not above a quarter of a mile distant from the monastery, upon the top of a rock, surrounded with many fir-trees. They told us, that this formerly had been his cell, and that a spring of most clear water we saw there, had been miraculously obtained by his prayers, which restored many sick persons to their health, and though drunk to excess, was never known to hurt any. The Benedictine friar, who was my companion in the voyage, drunk a great quantity of it by way of devotion, but was much incommoded thereby in coming down from the mountain; which,

that he might derogate nothing from the miracle, he attributed to the cold and pent-in air of the rocks.

This father assured me often, whilst we were there, that he felt his soul pierced with an extraordinary devotion, and a great sense of the presence of God; and demanded of me, whether I was not sensible of the same thing? I answered that I was; but withal, that in all this I did not believe any thing to be more than what was very common; it being very natural for grottos, dark places, close and shady forests, vast caverns, and the sources of fountains and rivers, to produce the same effect in us; and not only so, but that we often experience, when we are alone by night in great buildings, chapels, or churches, that our souls are moved with a kind of horror, which calls God to our remembrance, as I have often found by experience in my travels. And some few days after, as I passed the Alps, which are very high mountains, in company with this Benedictine, when we were come to a place which was very solitary, I obliged him to take notice, whether it were not indeed so as I had said; whereupon he ingenuously acknowledged, that he found himself no less moved than he had been at the Great Chartreuse. Nevertheless, these fathers make all strangers that frequent this place, to take notice of it as a special blessing of God, vouchsafed to this place by the intercession and merits of St. Bruno.

It is an astonishing thing to see, that those effects which God, as the Author of Nature works in us, are for the most part, by those of the communion of Rome, ascribed to a miraculous interposition in their behalf. So true it is, that it is a very pleasing thing, and extremely flattering to the pride of man, to believe that God thinks us worthy to be exempted from the common way, that he may favour us in a more peculiar manner, not sticking every moment (for our

sakes) to countermand the natural course of things here below, by prodigies and miraculous operations.

We came down from this monastery by a very narrow way between rocks, for the space of near two leagues, having on our left hand the torrent of St. Lawrence, which precipitates itself with a horrid noise from the top of the mountain to the bottom of it, where is situate the town of St. Lawrence, from whence it borrows its name. All the neighbouring country many leagues about belongs to the religious of this monastery; and every where are seen stately piles of building, and houses of pleasure, which they have caused to be built, with pools and ponds full of all sorts of rare fish to please their palates.

We afterwards continued our way towards Savoy, and passed the Alps by the way of Montcenis; from whence we came down into Piedmont, to a little town called Susa. Here, Sir, I intend to stop, and shall conclude this letter with this last reflection, which I would desire you to make, which is, that the Church of Rome, so far from having any cause to pride herself in her religious orders, and of which she boasts so much as far excelling the Protestant Church, which has wholly excluded them, ought rather upon that account to be humbled; yea, to blush for shame; seeing it is evident that this sort of men, under the specious pretexts of devotion, silence, and retirement, endeavour nothing else, but to acquire for themselves a great esteem in the minds of the people, that by this means they may turn them which way they please; and experience makes it appear that all this is done for their temporal advantage. They begin with the Spirit in appearance, but always palpably end in the flesh. I have made some other more curious discoveries during my voyage in Italy, which I shall be very willing to

communicate to you, in case I find you are not offended with this my first letter; but that you have received it with the same spirit of charity and zeal, which I shall always preserve for the spiritual good of so dear a person; as being, Sir,

Yours, &c.

LETTER II.

Corruption and Ambition of the Romish Clergy.—Susa.—Turin.—Splendor of the Churches.—Public Shows.—Miraculous Sheet, in which Joseph of Arimathea wrapped the Body of our Lord.—Uncharitable Temper of the Monks.—Genoa.—Italian Revenge.—Places of Refuge for Criminals.—The Inquisition.—Pope Sixtus V.—Romanists ignorant of the Principles of Protestantism.—Great care taken to prevent their knowing them.

FORASMUCH as there is nothing the Church of Rome more strictly forbids her children, next to the reading of the Scriptures, than the perusing of those writings which discover the lives and doctrine of her pastors, whom it is her will they should follow blindfold, without examining either what they say or do; I had some fear for my first letter, lest it might have given offence, because it made some discoveries to you of their conduct. But seeing the kind welcome you afforded it, I hope that the reflection you have made upon it, and the good inclination you express, in declaring your willingness to be further informed by me on this subject, may at length conduce to the opening of your eyes, to see the dangerous condition you are in. And therefore I shall gladly continue to communicate the observations I have made during my travels, about matters of religion.

Being arrived at Susa, a small town of Piedmont in Italy, and subject to the Duke of Savoy, we were told that the body of St. Maurus, abbot and first disciple of St. Bennet, reposed in one of the churches of this place. And forasmuch as the father that was my companion in my travels, was a reformed Benedictine, of the congregation of St. Maurus in France, I asked him whether he would

not go to pay his duty to that relique of his blessed founder? But he very freely told me, that he would take heed of doing so; adding, that the Italians were great cheats, who pretended to have all the saints of paradise in their country, whereas indeed there was nothing more false; forasmuch as the body of St. Maurus was preserved whole and entire in one of their abbeys in France. And moreover assured me that the bodies of St. Bennet and St. Scholastica were there likewise; the one in the small town of St. Bennet, on the river Loire near Orleans, and the other at Mans; notwithstanding the Italians contested with them about all these relics, and a vast number of others, of most authentic authority; and that upon no other ground but that of the Pope's bulls, which they have procured, said he, by some artifice or other for this purpose, and which declare them to be true and lawful possessors of these relics, though clear contrary to all evidence drawn from history and tradition. But father, said I, do you remember the discourse you held two days ago, as we passed the Alps, to prove the Pope's infallibility, which you extended with so much heat and earnestness, not only to matters of right, but also to matters of fact? The question then put was this, how the Popes could grant such thundering bulls, fraught with excommunications and anathemas against those who do not believe that the house of Loretto was transported from the Holy Land by angels, to that part of Italy where it is supposed to stand at present; as likewise against those who should deny that a great mountain near to the city of Cajeta, in the kingdom of Naples, which is open at the top, and as it were split in two, was one of those rocks that were rent at the passion of our Saviour Jesus Christ? You then affirmed that the Pope on all such occasions, was assisted with an infallible direction from the Holy Ghost; and consequently, that it

was impossible for him to be deceived himself, or to deceive others, any more than in matters of faith itself; and more especially yet, in a case of giving religious worship to some object of devotion, as that is which is given to the house of Loretto and to the holy mountain; and how then can you now say, father, with respect to your St. Maurus and St. Bennet, or any other whatsoever, that those Popes who declared against you in favour of the Italians have been mistaken? Is not this a case of worship as well as that of Loretto? The party was but visible, and the good father must needs have entangled himself in a most troublesome contradiction: wherefore to avoid the shame and confusion that thence would have followed, he chose rather to turn his answer into a piece of raillery, saying he confessed that he was indeed a very bad politician, because when he was on the Alps he spake like an Italian, but that at present he spoke as a Frenchman. Because it is true that the people of Italy, especially those of the Pope's territories, do own the Pope's infallibility in matters of fact, which the greatest part of the Roman Catholics of France do deny.

This distinction of speaking as an Italian or as a Frenchman was indeed very frivolous; and in truth, if it were permitted to utter one's opinion, sometimes according to the humour of one country and sometimes of another, if our Benedictine had spoken like a German or an Hungarian, he would have reduced the papal authority to a very low ebb; for I had observed in my travels, that these people, though for the most part they profess the Romish religion, yet have this advantage, that they believe little of it. Without doubt, Sir, it would much better have become him to have spoken as a Christian ought to do, viz. like a good and honest man, with a sincere and unbiassed spirit strengthened by grace, supported

by reason, and grounded upon the Holy Scripture; for then would he never have attributed the title of infallible to a mortal man upon earth, which belongs to God alone. I was ready to give him my thoughts to this purpose, but I called to mind that I was got into Italy, where only one word might drag me before the cruel and merciless tribunal of the Inquisition, and therefore thought it more wisdom to hold my peace. However I could not but make this reflection on these proceedings of the religious; that in cases wherein the priests or monks find their advantage, or in things altogether indifferent to them, they are not wanting with open mouth to publish the Pope's infallibility; but when his infallibility seems in the least to clash with their interests, he is no more than an ignorant and mistaken man, who may be bubbled as well as any other.

From Susa we came to Turin, which is a very fine city, situate upon the banks of the river Po, and the court of the Dukes of Savoy. Here it was that a dawning of the beauty of the churches of Italy presented itself to our eyes: the greatest part of the parish churches, monasteries and convents are very sumptuously built, and most richly adorned within. Nothing is seen in them, but marble, porphyry, jasper stones, and most exquisite gilding and painting. The crosses, the candlesticks, lamps, statues, and cases of the relics, are all of gold and silver, and almost infinite in number and value. Some good French priests, who had joined themselves with us, to take a view of the churches, were in a strange rapture at so dazling a sight, and being inwardly moved to see so many temples of the Lord so gloriously adorned, wept for joy: For as in their journey from France, they had taken their way through Geneva, and the Swiss Cantons, where they had seen the Protestant Churches, devoid almost of

all material embellishments, they from thence concluded, (how truly I leave you to judge,) that there was no other true religion, besides that of the Church of Rome, whose zeal for the house of God, was an evident witness of the truth of her faith. I told them that this their conclusion seemed to me to be built upon very weak principles, and that where we had a mind to prove the truth of any religion, the grandeur and riches of the world were too weak premises to support a conclusion; and that for my part, if I were to form a presumptive argument in favour of any religion, I should sooner take it from the good life and manners of those who profess it, than from the sumptuous ornaments of their churches.

They shewed us the church treasury, where is preserved the holy shroud or sheet; and soon after the canons and priests entered the choir, to sing their vespers and complins, which are the evening prayers of the Church of Rome. They entered without any order, and very undecently, talking and laughing together, and pushing one anothers elbows. The first come, without waiting till the rest were settled in their places, began to sing the office: and that which might well have lasted an hour and a half, in case it had been said with the required pauses, devoutly and modestly, as it is practised in the Common Prayer of the Church of England, was dispatched in less than a quarter of an hour, with a strange kind of precipitation, so that it was scarcely possible to distinguish between one word and another, or between the end and beginning of the verses. In truth, Sir, were it lawful to judge of the consciences of men, from any thing that is outward, I might have had good reason to infer from their behaviour, that their hearts were much stranged from the words of their lips, and their lips and their hearts yet further from God. They did not much weary

our patience with hearing them; and the service being thus roundly dispatched, they rather fled than went out of the church, every one his own way. The father that was with me, perceiving that I was scandalized at it, told me, as having had former experience of Italy, by a journey he had some time before made through it; that it was not yet time for me to be offended, and that the nearer I should approach to Rome, the more cause I should find for it. I had been told indeed, that the further I went, the more stately churches I should find, and the more richly adorned: so that joining these two together, I concluded, that all this outward bravery and ornament, did not proceed from the piety or zeal of the clergy of Italy for the house of God; because they neglected the chief glory and embellishment of it, viz. the inward, and that something else must be the motive to it, as I discovered afterwards, and of which I shall give you a more particular account on another occasion.

After we had visited the churches, towards evening, we went to view the great Piazza of Turin, facing the palace of his Royal Highness. Here we saw many theatres or stages of rope-dancers and mountebanks, wherewith the market-places of the cities of Italy, are always well provided, for the satisfaction of the public. But that which surprised me most was, that the greatest part of those that assisted as auditors and spectators about those theatres, were either priests or monks, who clapped their hands in applause of the most ridiculous and scandalous stuff they produced, and laughed with all their might. We saw there of all sorts of orders, some father Jesuits, that seemed the most concerned for these fopperies, saluted the father Benedictine that was with us; and having understood that he was procurator general of the order, they offered him a place, near unto themselves, which he accepted of. For

my part, I was unwilling to engage myself in the concern, and retired with the two French priests to our inn.

We had opportunity the same evening of discoursing Count Zamberti, an officer of his Royal Highness, whom formerly I had seen in France, and we could not keep ourselves from acquainting him, how strangely we had been surprised, to see so many religious at the public shows, and so attentive to the lewd fooleries of buffoons, because we looked upon it as very unworthy and scandalous, and that no such thing was to be seen in France. He told us, that this was not that which ought most to surprise us, for that in Italy, those of the clergy who did commonly frequent the Piazza in the evening, were the most esteemed of, as being ordinarily the best amongst them. As to that which we alledged, that no such lewd deportments were to be found amongst our ecclesiastics in France, the Count very wisely replied, that for that we might thank the Protestants; for that it was only their presence that maintained the learning, modesty, and reserved carriage of the clergy of the Gallican Church, and if they once should be forced to quit the country, (for the king's design was already known here) we should soon see all sciences and virtues exiled with them. This, Sir, agrees incomparably well with what some persons of quality of the Roman communion have of late freely owned to me, that they begin already in France to perceive, that since the Protestants have been banished thence, and that they believed them far enough from them, the burning zeal of the ecclesiastics is turned to lukewarmness, their devotion grown cold, and their application to their studies become very flat and languishing. So that at present, they are seldom found at their books, but for the most part ranging from one house to another, upon pretence

of encouraging and confirming their new perverts, and boasting themselves for great doctors, with what they have learnt, at a time when they were forced upon by the learned writings, and close arguings of the Protestant ministers.

I return now to my voyage; but before I leave Turin, because I have already made mention of the church, wherein is kept the holy shroud or linen sheet, wherein they pretend our Saviour's dead body was wrapt; I suppose you will not take it amiss, if I tell you in short, what I think of it. They of our religion, suppose it to be the the same shroud or linen sheet, in which Joseph of Arimathea wrapt up and buried the precious body of our Lord Jesus Christ, after that it was taken down from the cross; and that the figure of that adorable body remains miraculously imprinted upon it, for the comfort of believers. I intend not to enter the lists about the truth of that history, which I never searched into; but I shall only tell you, Sir, that there is another of them to be seen in the cathedral of Besançon in Burgundy, which they maintain to be the same in which Joseph wrapt the body of our Saviour; several Popes, according to their distinct fancies and humours, have granted several bulls and indulgences, some to that of Turin, others to that of Besançon, until that these contestations raised such extreme feuds between the archbishops of these two cities, that at last they fell to libelling one another; whereupon, to stifle the flame from spreading further, a way was found out at Rome, to reconcile them, by determining (contrary to the express words of the vulgar translation, Matt. xxvii. *Et involvit illud sindone mundâ*, and wrapt it in a clean linen cloth; where the word *sindone* is in the singular number,) that there were two, and consequently that both the one and the other of them were true. It cannot indeed be denied, but

that there was such a shroud of linen cloth, and it is possible that with great care it might have been preserved till now, but to see the Church of Rome, for the reconciling of two bishops, with so much easiness, boldly to determine that there were two, when the Scripture seems to speak but of one; this is that which will not go down with men of understanding: and moreover to ordain, that the same worship and adoration be given to them both on Easter day, which is given to the cross on Good Friday, which does not differ at all from what is given to Jesus Christ himself—this is no less than downright impiety and idolatry.

After some days stay at Turin, finding myself within two days journey of Genoa, the curiosity of seeing that lofty city, made me resolve to go thither. However, I found some strife in myself about it, because of the satisfaction I had enjoyed in the company of my Benedictine, whose conversation was indeed very pleasant and agreeable; as finding, that if I continued my resolution, it would be necessary for us to part; for the letter of obedience, which he had showed me of his general, expressed, that he was without stop or stay to go directly to Rome. I communicated to him my resolution of going to Genoa, whereupon he immediately told me, that he was resolved to go along with me, and that he would order the matter so, as his superiors would know nothing of it; and accordingly in the letter he wrote to them from Turin, acquainting them, that being not yet wholly recovered from some fits of an ague he had had, he should be obliged to remain there still for some days, which was just the very time he took, to go this journey with me. I found by this, that the most reformed monks make no great scruple of violating the obedience they have vowed to observe, and to transgress the rules

they profess, upon the least occasion that presents itself to them, of any particular satisfaction. The use of meat was also forbid him by his rule, and yet he no sooner found himself at a distance from the monasteries of his order, but he made bold with it; and as soon as he met with another, he took up his observance again, as before, desiring me not to divulge that ever he had transgressed it. And in the mean time, I can say with truth, that I never saw a more rigorous censor of another man's actions than he was, when he was in the company of monks, who were not reformed, or who took more liberty than those of their congregation; neither had he any more charitable opinion for the people, whom the monks, by way of distinction, term the people of the world and worldlings, with which words they denote all laymen in general. It seemed to him impossible for a man that lived at large in the world, to be saved, except he took up and confined himself to a convent; yea, and it must be in a convent of his order too. If by chance he saw in the streets a woman well dressed, without examining whether her condition, or some other reason might oblige her to it, he immediately pronounced a sentence of eternal condemnation against her; saying, that she was a victim destined to the flames of hell; and if he heard speak of any person newly married, or that had obtained some good fortune, alas, (said he) these persons make their paradise of this world, but they shall burn for ever in the other for it. And thus without excepting any whatsoever, and putting a wrong construction upon the most innocent actions, he judged with an inveteracy of heart, what belongs alone to God to judge of. What I now say, is not only to be understood of this religious alone, but generally almost of all sorts of reformed religious, or those who profess a more strict life than others, and of se-

cular priests also, who by their little superstitious ways, pretend to be quite distinguished from the common sort of people: I have observed, that they judge men without mercy. Some have owned to me, that from their youth up they have been accustomed to these ideas, the world having been always represented to them as a tempestuous and raging sea, whence it is very rare to escape, without being shipwrecked, and that their monasteries are the very ports of salvation and the havens of grace, where it is imposible to perish. Whereas it were much better, to educate them in a spirit of humility, and to inspire them with charitable thoughts towards their neighbour, whether they joined with them in the same profession of life, or engaged in another way, to which we ought Christian-like to believe that God hath called them. This indeed we must own, that it seems to be the unhappy lot of all persons whatsoever that engage themselves in a party, not to have any consideration but for those of their own company, despising and condemning all the rest. It was this consideration without doubt, that made our fathers, the first reformers of religion, to disapprove, and afterwards to reject all these kind of inequalities, which by dividing men into several different states, do ordinarily divide their hearts also, and by this means separate them from the charity of Jesus Christ.

We arrived at Genoa the 1st of September. My companion being informed that there was a very fair abbey of his order in the city, called St. Catherine of Genoa, he would needs go and lodge there, in hopes of being as well entertained, as he had been hitherto in the several monasteries he had called at. He went and presented his letter of obedience to the abbot, who having read it, took a view of him from top to toe; he asked him, of what order he was? He answered, that his letter

shewed that, and that he was a reformed Benedictine. The other replied, that he believed nothing of what he said, because he was not in the habit of St. Bennet, which was the chief mark that distinguished their order. Now it is to be noted, that these monks in France wear gowns of coarse cloth, with a cowl cut very strait; whereas the Italians have extremely amplified theirs, and wear stuffs very fine and lustrous; they are very neatly shod, wear silk stockings, fine grey hats, and are not a whit inferior to the bravery of laymen. Moreover, a small difference in the habits in Italy, makes also a difference of order. There are about ten sorts of the religious of the order of St. Francis, who are only distinguished from one another, because some of them have their sleeves, or their cowls, two or three fingers-breadth larger than the others. And yet this makes so great a division between them, that they cannot endure the sight of one another, and hate one another mortally. The monk of whom I am speaking, was not sprucely enough accommodated, according to their mode, to please this nice and curious abbot; and the conclusion was, that he very basely denied him entrance into his monastery. The poor Benedictine was put into such a rage by this affront put upon him, that he could not forbear downright railing at the abbot in his own monastery; telling him, that he was an abbot accursed of God; that damnation would be his portion, and that all those that lived under his conduct, might make state to go to hell with him; that it was they that had changed the venerable habit of the order, and altered it to that degree, that it seemed at present rather contrived to please and entice young ladies, than to distinguish them from the people of this world; and that they would see one day, but alas too late! what a reception their glorious patriarch would afford them

in heaven, to that poor habit which he had upon his body, and which they vilified so much here on earth. The abbot found himself so extremely nettled at this invective, that he threatened our reformed monk, that in case he did not that very evening depart the city, he would take care to stop his pipes for him. The poor monk, frightened and trembling at his threat, returns to the inn where I was, and gave me an account of his disaster. This was the reason, that I staid only three days at Genoa, because my companion, for fear of being sacrificed to the Italick revenge, durst not stir abroad, but was fain to keep himself shut up in a chamber, all the while I staid there to take a view of the city.

Revenge is an abominable vice, and which at present is not without great reason particularly appropriated to the Italians; but certainly amongst them all, there are none that exercise and act it with greater rage and fury than the clergy; who, as they have no families to care for, their attention is less divided, and consequently more united and concentred, to resent injuries done unto them, and have also more leisure time to descant upon them; and besides all this, in case of any accident, they have none but their own persons to save. Neither do they fear so much as others the confiscation of their goods, as being assured, that whatsoever country their lot may cast them upon, so it be the Romish communion, they cannot miss of getting a livelihood by their masses, and of being furnished with a full supply of their necessities. This is a patrimony that follows them whithersoever they go, and cannot be taken away from them, but with their life. One thing which extremely facilitates the taking of revenge in Italy, is, the great number of petty principalities, into which it is divided; and whereof the princes are all of them independant one of another, and ex-

tremely jealous of preserving their rights, especially of protection and refuge, to those who having done some ill turn, retire themselves to their territories. The King of France would sooner and with more ease obtain a fugitive person from the Emperor, than from the Duke of Mirandula, whose territories do not extend themselves to three Italian miles; because always the more inconsiderable any power is, the more it strives to appear great. The commonwealth of St. Marin, is but an inconsiderable hamlet of about some fifty houses of poor peasants, who are governed by themselves: and though they be shut in on every side by the Pope's territories, which they call the Domain of St. Peter, yet they do give such a resolute protection to priests guilty of murder, or manslaughter, that it is not possible for the Pope to persuade them, to deliver up any one of them. Neither are the sovereign princes of Italy only thus jealous of the franchises of their estates, but also all persons of quality in general, who will not permit a malefactor to be seized in their houses.

I shall here tell you by the by, Sir, that it is this pretended liberty, which was the rise of the franchise or liberty of the ambassadors of crowned heads at Rome, and which caused the great dispute between Pope Innocent XI. and the French king; for seeing the ambassadors to distinguish themselves, were willing to have some privilege above the ordinary nobility, they did not only pretend to have an immunity for their palaces, but over and above, an entire franchise throughout all the quarters where their abode was. Now Pope Innocent XI. conceived it an enterprise becoming his glory and courage, efficaciously to endeavour the final destruction of these retreats for robbers and murderers in Rome, obliging the ambassadors for ever to renounce the franchises of the quarters, and to content them-

selves, for the respect born to their masters, with the immunity of their houses. But to speak the truth, to what purpose was it for the Pope to be so zealously bent, to abolish these places of refuge? Did not he know, that all the churches, monasteries, convents, and colleges of Rome, are so many open places, which one meets with at every turn, where injustice, robbery and murder are protected and secured? I confess, it seems not unreasonable, that the churches of God should be esteemed so holy and sacred, as to make it a kind of profanation to enter them armed, in order to seize a criminal; but what reason is there to allow the same privilege to all cloisters and houses of those wretched monks, that are the very worst of criminals? And the compass of those walls take up so much ground, that if they were all joined together, they would without doubt make more than a third part of Rome. And what is the sacredness and holiness of these profane persons, for which they are to enjoy this exemption? For my part, I cannot imagine any other reason for it, but that the Pope, with the rest of the ecclesiastical princes of that communion, endeavouring no less to establish their temporal power, than their usurped tyranny over the souls of men, will be very backward of diminishing the privileges belonging to the monasteries that are amongst them; lest foreign princes following their example, should undertake the same in their countries; and seeing, that the monks always side with the Pope, the taking of this course would be a manifest weakening of their own party. Moreover, these monks are of such mean and interested spirits, that if the Pope or a a cardinal send to them, to deliver up any that have taken refuge with them, they immediately comply with the demand, as being well pleased to have this occasion to procure their favour at

so cheap a rate: but if any other secular lord comes to request any such thing of them, then they stand stiffly in defence of their priviledges, and without a good piece of money in hand, will never grant their request; especially if the criminal be a monk, or a clergyman; and indeed, (as was mentioned before) that which makes them so bold in revenging themselves, is the assurance they have of being always seconded and assisted by some of their brotherhood. For upon any such occasions, they are very ready to take one another's part; so that it is impossible to offend any one of them, without engaging with a whole party. For either they are monks or friars, and so are fellow-members with all those of the same order, convent, or monastery; or they are secular priests, and so make up one body with all the other priests of their diocese, cathedral or parish; there being never a church so inconsiderable, that has not at least fifteen or twenty priests belonging to it. So that when any one member of the same body is offended, all the rest are affected by sympathy, and endeavour to revenge it, as done to themselves. It is evident, that a spirit of charity does not engage them to these courses; for charity avengeth not itself; but it is a kind of natural pleasure they take, to make others feel the effects of their rage and fury, that have either offended them, or those they have any relation to; and which makes them say with one of their poets:—

> Dolcissima, mortali, é la vendetta:
> Revenge is the sweetest thing in the world.

Myself, when I was at Bononia, counted no less than seventeen in one week, that had been sacrificed to this infernal fury, and who, (for the most part of them) had been murdered by either monks or priests. The great provost, who there is called

the Bargello, having by order of the cardinal-archbishop made search for a monk, who very scandalously kept a public stew, was one of the number of these unhappy victims, being miserably massacred on Easter-day, as he was coming out of a church.

One of the most dreadful means the clergy have to glut their vengeance, is the Inquisition, which they have introduced under the pretext of religion; though indeed it be the most diabolical invention that was ever forged in hell, and which they do as dexterously manage for the serving of their particular self-ends. They have made it an inquisition matter for any to strike, affront, or vilify any person belonging to the clergy, whether secular or regular. I will give you an instance how they proceeded at Bononia, against an honest man of my acquaintance, who, in the heat of his passion had called a Dominican friar, *old fool of a monk*. The friar immediately went and made his complaint to the Inquisitor, who, forthwith caused the young man to be seized, and cast into the inquisition prison, where he continued ten months before ever an enquiry was made about the cause of his commitment. At last he was brought before the sacred tribunal; and forasmuch as he could not deny, but that he had called the friar, *old fool of a monk;* his indictment was drawn up to this purpose: He who doth not respect churchmen, doth not believe the ecclesiastical estate worthy of honour, and consequently is an heretic. Now it is apparent, that you have had no respect for brother Nicholas, who is an eccleastic; and consequently, neither do you think the ecclesiastic state worthy of honour, and therefore are an heretic. The defendant pleaded for himself, that it was true he called the plaintiff, *old fool*, but only with respect to his person, without intending the least reflection upon his profession. But the plaintiff insisted,

that he called him *fool*, with respect to his profession, by joining the word *monk* with that reproachful word, and without adding these words, saving your character. For truth it is, that if in Italy a man chance to affront a priest or a monk, by calling them knaves, rascals, or the like, so he do but remember immediately to subjoin, saving your character, or saving your habit, they cannot make an inquisition matter of it; but if by mischance this be forgotten, he is undone. Thus this poor gentleman was found guilty.

As for striking any one of the clergy, in what manner soever it be, whether sorely or slightly, it is always a matter the inquisition takes cognizance of. And this is that which makes the men of the church so peremptory and insolent throughout all Italy. I happened at Rome to see a priest, who fell out with an officer in the Piazza Navona: the officer very dexterously and freely stained the priest with his tongue, never forgetting at the end of each enquiry, to compliment him with a saving his character; which so confounded the poor priest, that quite foaming with rage, he began to say to the people that stood about, Gentlemen, I must put this man into the inquisition, for if I be not mistaken, he struck me: did not you see him to give me a slight stroke? Indeed, he could have wished he had with all his heart, that so he might have had an opportunity to have prosecuted his revenge; but none of those that were present having seen any such thing, they could not witness against him.

The Italians have a proverb, that he who would live peaceably at Rome, must take heed of offending any female or priest; because the women procure their lovers to work their revenge, and the clergy make use of the inquisition to avenge themselves. It is true indeed, that persons of rank amongst them, as abbots, bishops and car-

dinals, do not ordinarily make use of this means, as appearing to them a little too troublesome. They have servants and dependents who, for money or to obtain some favour, do voluntarily offer themselves to be the executioners of their revenge; and if at any time they chance to be seized in the act, they are but very little concerned at it, fully relying upon their master's power and authority, who are never wanting, by all manner of means, to procure their discharge and liberty. As for the Popes, who are no more exempt from this weakness than other men, neither do they forget, upon occasion, to make use of the power they have in their hands, but like other monarchs, whenever they are offended shew themselves to have long hands. There is no speaking to these holy fathers of humility or patience in suffering of injuries, in imitation of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose person they will needs represent upon earth. They have in a manner rejected all his virtues, and their study at present is, to represent here below his heavenly glory, viz. his power and judicature. The title of *holiness* which is given them, is only a swelling term they make use of to express their pride. We have a signal example of revenge in the life of Pope Sixtus the Fifth. He was of a very mean extraction, his father being a poor vine-dresser, and his mother a servant maid, and he himself in his youth was reduced to be a hog-herd; and yet by the subtilty of his spirit, in conjunction with an extraordinary fortune, he stepped over all these difficulties, and mounted the pontifical throne. But so far was this meanness of his birth from inspiring him with an answerable degree of humility, in the midst of that greatness to which he was raised, that he could not endure the least hint of it; but by a revengeful inclination, which was natural to him, he let loose his cruel and unrelenting nature

against all those, who either imprudently, or of set-purpose let drop the least word of contempt reflecting that way; of which the following story may be a pregnant instance. The statue of Pasquin in Rome appeared one morning with a very nasty shirt pulled over it; and Morforious demanding the reason, why for shame he did not shift himself, and put on a clean one? Because (answered Pasquin) my washer-woman is become a princess. This answer stung the Pope's sister Camilla, who of a poor washer-woman, which she was before, was by her brother raised to a principality. The Pope being enraged at this cutting satire, made use of all the ways imaginable to find out the author; but missing the desired success in this his research, he betook himself to craft and circumvention, but that too one so base and unworthy, that the whole recital of it is sufficient to strike a man with horror. He caused it to be published every where, that he was so extremely pleased with the delicate poignancy of this piece of wit, that if the author of it would come and discover himself to him, he would be so far from punishing him with death, that he would bestow upon him two thousand crowns for a reward. The poor unhappy wretch, trepanned by this advantageous promise makes himself known. The Pope, upon his owning himself to be the author of it, caused the two thousand crowns to be counted out to him, assuring him withal, that he would be as good as his word, and that he should not be hanged. At which words the wretch overjoyed, poured forth his most humble acknowledgements to his holiness, for so unparalleled a piece of grace. Aye, aye, (answered the Pope) I will be as good in my word in all this; but take notice, Sirrah, that I never promised you not to cause your hands to be cut off, and your tongue to be plucked out of your head. And immediately commanded the cruel sentence to be

executed in his presence, as a pleasing sacrifice to his implacable revenge.

I have sometimes set myself to enquire, what might be the cause of this spirit of vengeance, which now-a-days is become so natural to the Italians, whether it proceeds from the climate, or nature of the country, or from some other necessary and inevitable cause. But having called to my rememberance the generosity, courage, and greatness of soul, that shone forth so illustriously in the lives of the ancient Romans, who inhabited the same country, and who rendered themselves every where as amiable by their clemency, as formidable for their valour, I soon found that I was rather to seek for a moral cause of it, than a natural; and as far as I can reach it is this, that the greatest part of Italy, in process of time, being fallen under the domination of the bishops of Rome, they sent priests to be their lieutenants in the several provinces of their dominions; a sort of people equally ignorant in matters of commerce and war, which are the two sinews of a state, and without which the government is like a body afflicted with the palsy, without either action or motion. This idleness, joined to the great heat of the country, and to the corrupt examples of the said governors, as being men that only minded their pleasures, at last introduced an entire dissolution and effeminacy. In Rome of old, the sword sometimes gave way to the robe, and arms to letters. *Cedant arma togæ.* But at present all veils to the love of women. This love being excessive and unbounded, is the inseparable companion of jealousy; and the fruit of jealousy, inexorable revenge; which are the two great vices that now stain the reputation of the Italians. From this great easiness of revenging themselves, when affronted in their amours, they are now arrived at that point, as not to suffer the least word,

or the least injury to fall to the gronnd, without taking (so it be in their power) a most pitiless revenge. This vice, which had its birth in the Pope's dominions, has insensibly dispersed itself into those of the neighbouring princes, and at present miserably infected all Italy. It has been observed, that *Bononia* and *Ferrara*, who were the last that submitted their necks to the Roman yoke, have since that time doubled their revengeful spirit. But that which is most of all to be condemned in their way of revenge is, that they do commonly execute it in the basest and most cowardly manner imaginable; that is, either by poison, or treacherously stabbing their enemy in the back. They deride our duels, and say, it is the greatest folly in the world, to put the sword into our enemy's hand, and by this means place him in as fair a way of being revenged of us, as we ourselves are of being avenged of him. When we have an enemy, say they, we are not such fools as to cry to him at a distance, stand upon your guard, but endeavour to kill him with the first occasion, without putting ourselves to the hazard of being killed by him.

However, Sir, though the Italians have their faults, yet, on the other hand, I must own that they also have their good qualities. They are very prudent in the conduct of their affairs, very discreet in their discourse, civil and handsome in their carriage amongst themselves, or towards strangers; they are good counsellors, and very ready to render service; constant in their friendship, and of a very obliging humour, provided it cost them nothing: they are very witty, and, I dare say, that if their priests and monks had not corrupted tham in their morals, and had not so strangely spoiled and changed their religious worship, as well as the best country in Europe, they would be some of the best men in the world. In-

deed, Popery is grown to that prodigious excess of idolatry, superstition, and folly, that I am astonished they are so backward in casting off that yoke. I know there are a great many amongst them, who begin to open their eyes and see their errors ; but they dare not declare their minds to any one whatsoever, for fear of falling victims to the barbarous and inexorable cruelty of the Inquisition.

This tribunal was set up more particularly for a curb to the Italians, amongst whom many began to waver in their attachment to the doctrines of Rome. And in order to make it the more fierce and terrible, the Popes thought they could not trust it in better hands than those of the Dominicans, a cruel and pitiless sort of fellows, and more than any order, engaged to maintain the Pope's interest. And to encourage them to a rigorous discharge of that barbarous and butcherly function, they have found it convenient from time time, to confer the episcopal dignity upon the most zealous inquisitors, and even to raise many of them to the eminence of cardinals. Throughout all the dominions of the Great Duke of Florence, this employ has always been attributed to the Franciscans, many of whom likewise have been elevated to bishoprics and cardinals' caps. The end in dividing the inquisition thus between two different orders, was only in order to the more vigorous maintaining of the same by the emulation of both the pretenders. The main design at first intended for the erecting of the inquisition, was by ways of blood and violence, to put a stop to the progress of heresy, or to speak in their own terms, *Contra hæreticam pravitatem.* But the clergy having since considered the great advantage the inquisition gave them above the laity, have learned so dexterously to serve themselves of it, that at present there is scarce any

thing, which they have not brought within the verge of that court, in order to bring about their private self-ends. If you fail of paying your tithes, without troubling them to examine whether you be able or not, they argue, *that the reason why you do not pay them, is because you don't believe they ought to be paid, and consequently that you are an heretic.*

If the least word chance to drop from you, reflecting upon the licentious lives of the bishops and clergy, whether regular or secular, they accuse you as one whose design is to vilify the episcopal dignity, and consequently the church itself, in the eyes of the people; that in so doing you have done the heretics' work for them, and served their interest, and therefore must be looked upon as being one yourself. If a man be known to have an estate, and in the mean time shews himself cold and indifferent in contributing to the collections that are made for the saying of masses, and other prayers, for the repose of the souls of the dead; though it be well known, that there is never a priest or monk that will so much as say one without money; he is presently accused, as one who doth not believe purgatory, and consequently a downright heretic. Nay moreover, if any one be frequently observed to refuse putting something into those boxes that continually run up and down the streets, to help to celebrate the festivals of such or such saint, towards such a procession in such a church, towards the chapel of the Rosary, towards the scapulary of the Blessed Virgin, or for the cord of St. Francis; these fellows have the impudence to tell you, that they see well enough, you have no devotion for holy things, and consequently believe little of them; which is a kind of advertisement, that in case you should be guilty again of the same neglect, occasion would be taken to recommend you

to the inquisition, there to learn better manners. It is not lawful for any to excuse, or to intercede (either in person, or by one's friends) directly or indirectly, for those who have had the mishap to fall into the prisons of the inquisition, except you have a mind to involve yourself in the guilt of the same crimes, whereof they are attainted. One cannot so much as come to speak to them without an express permission given in writing by the Inquisitor himself, which he never grants, but with a great deal of difficulty, and very seldom.

An Abbot of Calabria, one of my acquaintance, was put into the Inquisition at Venice, for smiling at the story a certain monk told, about the apparition of a soul in purgatory. After that he had been a whole year in prison, I understood that sentence of death was not yet pronounced against him, though he had been several times put upon the rack; and having occasion to go to the Inquisitor, to obtain his licence for printing a book; I took this opportunity to beg leave of him, that I might go and see this poor prisoner; who, having heard the request I made him, looked sternly upon me, and demanded, what business I had to concern myself with him? I told him, that nothing made me to desire this favour, save only a motive of charity, to bestow some words of comfort upon him. But the monk answered me in a most rude and disobliging way, or rather like himself, that the prisoner was in very good hands, and did not at all stand in need of any of my comfort; so that it was not possible for me to get to speak with him. However, I had the satisfaction of seeing him set at liberty about six months after, through the charitable care, and powerful intercession of Cornelia Episcopia, a noble Venetian young lady, of extraordinary learning and merit, to whom my friend dedicated his learned poems, which he had composed during the time of his confinement.

I have before mentioned, that it was not lawful to intercede for any, that are committed by the Inquisition; but you must know, Sir, that the Inquisition is much more favourable in Venice, than it is in other parts of Italy. That wise senate abhorring the inhumanity of those monks that manage it, have erected a particular chamber, where some Venetian nobles preside, and take cognizance of all matters that are brought before the Inquisition, insomuch that the Dominicans are not altogether the masters of it. This friend of mine having had the good fortune to escape so great a danger, was so sensibly touched with the cruelties they had made him suffer during his imprisonment, that he readily concluded from thence, that the Church of Rome being possessed with such a spirit of cruelty and barbarity, as is never to be paralleled even amongst the worst of heathens, could never be the true spouse of Jesus Christ. She might indeed be allowed the prudence of serpents, for her own preservation, provided it were always in conjunction with the mild nature of the dove, that so she might not render herself unworthy of, and unlike to him, who wills us to learn of him to be meek and lowly of heart. My friend confest to me, that, indeed, before he was cast into prison, he had some doubts about purgatory and transubstantiation; but that since they had gone about to make him believe them per force, he believed nothing at all of them, and that he was resolved to retire into Switzerland or Geneva, there to enjoy the *liberty of conscience* which would not be allowed him in his own country. He told me, that never a night passed over his head in which he was not disquieted in his sleep, with the frightful ideas of the torments he had endured in their dungeons, where they had racked all his members out of joint, one after another, bruised all his fingers, and applied plates

of red hot iron to the soles of his feet; and, after all this, to make him the more sensible of his pains, they in this condition shut him up again for some days in his dungeon, allowing him nothing but a poor morsel of brown bread, and a small measure of water, and then again put him into the hands of the executioners of the Inquisition, to go through a new course of torments. They tied him by one arm, and by means of a pully, hoisted him up into the air, and there left him hanging for several hours, which time being over, they let him down again, rather dead than alive; and to bring him to himself again, they most cruelly and inhumanly scourged him till he was all of a gore of blood. And all this, (O strange and unparalleled barbarity!) to discover the secrets of a poor conscience, and to search the bottom of a heart, which God has reserved to himself as his own divine prerogative. The father inquisitor, who was all the while present to encourage the executioners, and to observe whether they were not wanting in their duty, sometimes would draw near to the patient, and with a severe tone demand of him, whether he did not believe purgatory yet, wishing him to think seriously of it, for that all that he suffered there, was but a slight draught of the torments of that place, and that it was much more terrible to fall into the hands of the living God. This poor gentleman answered nothing to all this, save only sighs and tears. But he confessed to me, that since he had made a very serious reflection upon this matter, and that he was come to this result, that it was utterly inconsistent with the infinite goodness of God, to treat those souls whom he had destined to his heavenly glory, and the enjoyment of himself for ever, to such extremities of pains and torments. That all the works of God being perfect, he shewed mercy to whom he shewed

mercy; that is to say, perfect and complete mercy; and that it was infinitely more glorious for him, wholly to pardon both guilt and punishment, than to reserve himself a miserable vengeance from the fire and flames of their feigned purgatory; and that for this very reason he did not believe any thing of it all.

The common punishment inflicted at Venice on those who are convicted of heresy, is either to strangle them in prison, or to tie a great stone to their necks, and so cast them into the sea. And herein also, the Inquisition of Venice is much more favourable than it is in other parts of Italy, where they either burn them alive with a slow fire, or else cut off their members one by one, which are cast into the fire before their eyes, after having first of all plucked out their tongues, and made them suffer inexpressible torments. Can you ever believe in good earnest, Sir, that this is the spirit of the Gospel? Is this the way our Saviour made use of to convert sinners? Did he ever threaten the disobedient or unbelievers with prisons, racks and tortures? Has he ever left us so much as one example or command to authorise this sacred inquisitorial method? I trow no; and consequently this cannot be the spirit of Christianity. Thus, these very means the Popes take to maintain their tyranny over the consciences of men, might serve, (and without doubt will so in time) for just motives to pull it down, if the people would once open their eyes, and vigorously oppose themselves to the effects of a most unjust and inhuman violence. It is virtue alone that stands in need of no support; but sin and iniquity are always in search of props and contrivances to uphold their tottering and crazy constitution; and what they cannot carry by the strength of the lion, they endeavour to bring about by the fox's craft. Thus what the Popes

and their adherents cannot obtain by the Inquisition, they strive to compass by artifice and lies.

One of the chief fetches they have to keep the people in their obedience, is to secure them in the chains of profound ignorance; first of the truths of the Gospel, very expressly forbidding them to read the Holy Scriptures, as a book very dangerous and pernicious to their souls. Their next care is to prevent any books of controversy, written by Protestants, from coming into their hands. It is an inquisitorial matter to have or read any of them, or to be privy to any others having them. Moreover, they take special care to charge the preachers in their sermons, that in speaking of the Protestants, who being very well grounded in their principles, must consequently be looked upon, as the most formidable enemies the Church of Rome has, they be sure to represent them to their auditors, as men that have absolutely renounced the faith of Jesus Christ, and who do no more believe in him, than heathens and infidels. Wherefore, also, they indifferently call them heretics and infidels; or to make use of the Italian word, *Questi non Christiani*. So that indeed all the common people, yea, and the greater part of those that are learned too, are of the opinion, that Protestants do not at all believe in Jesus Christ, no more than the Turks do. A Canon once demanded of me in Rome, by way of curiosity, What the infidels did in France, and why they were suffered there? I desired him to tell me what he meant by that word, which I did not understand; and finding that he spoke of Protestants, I told him, that they were no infidels, but believe in Jesus Christ as well as the Roman Catholics, only that they reject transubstantiation, the mass, purgatory, &c., and in particular the power and infallibility of the Pope. And having heard me discourse at this rate for a good while:

in truth, Sir, (said he) if the case be as you say, I perceive that those people are not such great devils as they are represented to us here. I have often heard it declared from the pulpit, that they were as unbelieving as the Jews themselves; and you are the very first I ever heard say, that the Protestants believed in Jesus Christ.—But, Sir, said I, it is impossible, but that you who have studied Divinity, must needs have heard of the opinions of Luther, Calvin and Zuinglius, in the treatise of the sacraments in general, and in particular of those of the Eucharist, Penance, the Sacrifice of the Mass, &c.—I know, (said he) that those ring-leaders of heresy, pretended not to destroy, but to reform the church; and as to some points, they have very strong arguments, which even to this day we are hard put to, to answer. But, nevertheless, God, who hath a particular care of his Church, that he might make known to believers, that these then were in a bad way, has so ordered it, that their whole party came to nothing. For as one error draws on another, they have still rolled from one precipice to another, till at last they are fallen into the abyss of infidelity. They at first separated themselves from the Church of Rome, upon the pretence of reforming it, but some time after their followers reduced all to the particular spirit, which is to believe what they please, and that, provided only they do worship one God, whosoever he be, and lead a morally good life, that this is enough for them to be saved.

I perceived by this discourse, Sir, that this Canon had been ill informed, (as indeed most of the Italians are) of the present state of Protestants and of their doctrine, and that at Rome all manner of slights and tricks are made use of against those who refuse to bow their knees to Baal. To tell a lie with them is a virtue, as long as it is but

employed, as they think, for a good end. I remember that a Jesuit, who was lately come from England, boldly preached in the church of Lateran, that all religion there was reduced to the particular spirit. And having made an ample description of the Anabaptists and Quakers, under the name of the Church of England, he made all his auditory break forth into a loud laughter; and by this means, without doubt, though with a great deal of injustice, he made many there present conceive very contemptuously of that august and venerable body of Protestants, the Church of England; so zealous for the glory of God, and of Jesus Christ his only Son; so exact and decent in the obedience she renders to his Divine Majesty, and so reasonable in her orders and ceremonies. As long as those vigilent pastors, the Bishops of the Church of England, and the learned Ministers that are under them, keep their watchful eyes fixed on the flocks committed to their charge, there is no cause to fear, that ever the Romish wolf will be in a condition to snatch so much as any single one of them out of their hands; nor will any of her emissaries, as subtle thieves as they be, ever be able by night to steal into the sheepfold to devour or massacre them, as they have already so often endeavoured to do.

At this rate did this calumniating Jesuit, with a renowned malice, from the beginning of his sermon to the end, endeavour to make them odious and execrable. Neither was it a hard matter for him to obtain his end, in a country where they are so little known, and where they are never mentioned but under the notion of devils, heretics, new Christians, and infidels. But the case would be much altered, if retaining what is good and lawful, or only indifferent amongst them, as far at may be, the Protestants would singly apply themselves to oppose those points

of doctrine or practice amongst them, which first occasioned the reformation; for so they would not be able to condemn them in any thing, but by producing the points of doctrine and practice in controversy, with the oppositions made against them; which is a thing they are very loath to do, for fear of discovering their own nakedness. An evident proof of what I here allege, is the great care they take to hinder any books of controversy from coming into Italy, not so much as those which have been penned by the most famous men of their own party.

I was extremely put to it, when I was at Rome, to meet with the works of Monsieur Arnaud, which he had dedicated to the Pope, and which I do not believe were ever yet translated into Italian; their design herein being to prevent, by all means imaginable, the true state of the question from being known; for their objections are so weak, and the answers they make to those of the Protestants so pitiful, that any unprejudiced mind may easily from their own books perceive on what side the truth lies. If ever there was any author that strained his wits to calumniate and blacken the Protestants, it was, without doubt, *Father Maimbourg*, the Jesuit, in his books of *Lutheranism* and *Calvinism*. When I was at Venice, I undertook the translation of all his works; and had already translated several of his volumes, when I took in hand those of Lutheranism and Calvinism; but I was not a little surprised, when the Inquisitor of Venice would not give me leave to finish the traduction; and some time after, I received an order from the Pope, forbidding me to print those two books, with another of the same author, treating about the growth of the power of the bishops of Rome. The single title of bishop, which was given him in this last treatise, instead of the magnificent titles of Pope

and Sovereign Priest, together with some curious enquiries concerning the rise and progress of that prodigious grandeur to which the bishops of Rome are mounted at present, were a powerful motive to the Pope to condemn it. But I could not penetrate what reason he had to pronounce the same sentence against the other two, except it were, as I hinted before, to prevent the occasion of renewing in the minds of the Italians, the state of the question between the Catholics and the Protestants. For, notwithstanding, both of these books be fraught with scoffs, injurious reproaches and calumnies, coined on purpose to render a party contemptible, whom they had resolved by all manner of means to run down in the conceit of the people, yet for all this, Innocent XI. did not believe that this beating them down, would prove of as great advantage to the Church of Rome, as the publication of some points of doctrine that are there necessarily inserted, might prove dangerous and mischievous to it.

You can in no way imagine, Sir, the extreme precautions the Popes make use of to prevent any Protestant books being brought into Italy. As there is no other way to enter that country by land, without passing the Alps, they keep men express at all the passages thereof, to examine the travellers that come that way, and search them whether they have any forbidden books about them ; amongst which number are accounted all those that treat of controversies. In a journey I made from Venice to Lyons, I took my way, in my return to Italy, through the land of Valois ; at the entry of this country, which is a kind of a streight or narrow passage of the mountain, there is a famous abbey of the canons regular of St. Austin, called St. Maurice. The river Rhôsne, which is extremely impetuous and violent in this place, and which a little lower dis-

embogues itself into the Lake of Geneva, leaves only a very narrow way, by which one must necessarily pass to enter Italy. The abbot of St. Maurice, had built a gate at this pass, and for as much as he is the master of it, the Popes who know it to be one of the keys of the Alps, which opens a way to Italy, have charged him to have a careful eye upon all passengers coming that way, that they do not bring with them any forbidden books; because Geneva, which they stand in great fear of, is no further from it than the length of its lake. The promise the Pope had made to the abbot, of making him a bishop, in case he were found faithful in the discharge of his commission, had made him very exact when I passed by that way. He caused all passengers to be stopped without exception; those that were on foot, were searched at the gate by the guards, and those on horseback that had any appearance, were conducted into the abbey, where the abbot entertained them very civilly, and made them eat with him, whilst they were searching their portmanteaus.

The abbot, with whom I discoursed after dinner for a good while, told me, that the Pope allowed him money towards the entertainment of passengers, because without that the whole revenue of his abbey would not have been sufficient for it. And that he had sent him most pressing letters, to recommend to him an extraordinary care of that post, whence he easily conceived, how much they apprehended the books of Protestants at Rome. And being himself well acquainted with the temper of Italy, he told me, that if the Italians, and more particularly the Pope's subjects, might but have the least communication with Geneva, it might be greatly feared, they would utterly cast off their obedience to the Pope. Indeed, there are none that have more

reason to know the weakness of that god on earth, of the sacred college of cardinals, and of other ecclesiastics, than they who are the eye witnesses of it; neither are there any more concerned than they, to cast off a yoke, which upon other accounts is so insupportable to them. One can scarcely call to mind the flourishing condition of those fair provinces, that constitute the patrimony of St. Peter, without shedding of tears, to see them miserably groaning and languishing under the oppressive domineering of priests, wholly waste and desolate, and deprived of their former beauty and ornament. Those famous and ancient cities of Ravenna, Benevento, Spoleto, Perusa, Orvietta, and so many more, which heretofore were the glory of Italy, are hardly any thing else at present but heaps of rubbish, occasioned by the insatiable avarice and rapaciousness of the Popes. True it is, that naturally this country is the most pleasant and fruitful territory in the world, but withal there is none more bare of money. The immense impositions the Pope lays on it, have exhausted a great part of it; and the Legates he sends thither every three years, strive by all manner of extortions, during their triennial government, to squeeze out the rest, and then return to Rome, laden with the spoil of the miserable people; where they are no sooner arrived, than they consume it with as much prodigality as they had hooked it in by avarice and extortion.

I will not here entertain you with the grandeur and luxury of the Roman court; I may have an occasion to give you some account of that more at large hereafter. I shall only desire you to tell me, whether indeed you do not believe, that the Italians have great reason to endeavour to deliver themselves from so oppressive an usurpation and tyranny, by withdrawing at the same time their consciences from so intolerable a slavery, and

their estates from the hands of such merciless extortioners. For my part, Sir, I cannot question, but that if the learned writings of Protestants of the Church of England, could one day make their way into this country, and that they would only so far honour them, as to give them the reading; I say, I doubt not but that Popery, whose foundations they so evidently overturn, would find itself at on end. Or rather let us say, that it shall be thus, when it shall please our great God the Father of lights, to enlighten their minds towards an acknowledgement of their blindness, and to warn their hearts by his holy grace, to embrace the truth; that then, I say, we shall see all Italy turned Protestants against their own errors, and composing one sheepfold with those, who so many years ago so courageously protested against them, under the one and only shepherd of our souls the Lord Jesus Christ. I shall not trouble you, Sir, with the relation of other particulars and curiosities, I observed at Genoa; forasmuch as my design is not, as I have hinted to you before, to give you an entire relation of my travels, but only to single out those matters that more particularly have some reference to religion. This is that I intend to do from time to time in these my Letters, if I find you continuing to give them the same reception wherewith you have favoured my first. It being my great wish to evidence to you with what zeal I am, Sir,

Yours, &c.

LETTER III.

Hospitals.—Origin of these Institutions.—Abuses in their administration.—Hospital of the Dominicans at Viterbo.—Influence of the Priests.—Abbot of Clugny.—Pilgrimages.—Impositions practised by Pilgrims.—Miraculous Image of the Virgin at Florence.—Laughable Story.—Fondness of the Italians for Miracles.—Three Holy Deserts near Florence.—Kind treatment of the Monks of Camaldule.—Dissertation on Silence.—Valombrosa.—St. John Gualbert.—The Monks of Mount Alverne.—St. Francis d'Assise.—Revelations and Miracles.

TO continue the account I have undertaken to give you, of the observations I made in my voyage of Italy, relating to matters of religion; I shall tell you, Sir, that from Genoa we took our way along the sea cost, and in three days arrived at Sestre, an episcopal see, situate on the sea of Liguria. The bishop of the place received us with a great deal of civility. We had waved going by sea to Leghorn, because the father, my companion, could not bear that kind of passage, and was besides very fearful of falling into the hands of pirates. None can be imagined more stoical in their discourses on death than the monks are, neither are any more cowardly and frightful than they, when they are in any likelihood of facing it. This made us resolve to pass the Appenine to Luca, and from thence continue our journey through Tuscany. The bishop advised us to take guides along with us in passing the mountain, forasmuch as otherwise he assured us, we should run great hazard of being robbed; that we had a three days journey to pass through very desert and solitary ways, where we should meet with neither houses nor villages, except only two or three sorry inns, at twelve leagues distance from each other. There are always plenty of these guides at Sestre, in readiness to accompany travellers, being provided with car-

bines, blunderbusses, pistols, and bayonets. The custom is to take two or three of them, or as many as one pleaseth, to pass the mountain, paying them two crowns a piece. Two Genoa merchants intending the same way, joined company with us, which made us only take two guides with us, at the charge of four crowns. Our Benedictine, whom one would have thought should have been more circumspect, had a mind to make use of his wits, and to spare the crown he was to pay for his share to the guides we had taken; saying, that he would spare that money, to make much of himself at the next inn he should come at; that there was no danger at all in passing the mountain, and that all those guides were a company of knaves, who made it their business to fright passengers, to get a piece of money out of them; but that he, for his part, was resolved they should have none of his. Thus having taken directions of the way in writing, he went his way two hours before us. For my part, I remembered the counsel the bishop had given us, who was a venerable old man; and considered, that if it were only for the respect that is due to old age, we ought never (where it may be done) reject the advice of such persons. For this reason, I joined myself with the Genoese merchants, resolving to go with them, attended by our guides. The Benedictine parted from us at six o'clock, though with an intent not to make so much haste, but that we might overtake him, that so he might have an opportunity of falling again (as it were by chance) into our company, without being obliged to pay any thing towards the guides we had taken on our own account. But so it happened, that very unluckily for him, we staid three hours longer than was intended; for we did not leave the city till eleven o'clock. We were extremely suprised, when at the end of

seven leagues, upon the mountain, we found this poor monk sitting on a stone, lamenting, and all in tears, for the mishap that had befallen him. He had been set upon in the same place by five robbers, who having dismounted him, had taken away all his money, and all they found in his portmanteau, except his Breviary, which they had restored to him; which seemed to vex him more than all the rest: "For," said he, "had they but taken this with the rest, I should at least have been excused from saying my Breviary till I came to Rome." We made a shift to get him on horseback again, persuading one of the guides to lend him his; in consideration of which, the monk promised to give him his boots, and we defrayed his charges amongst us until we came to Luca. He assured us, that the men that had robbed him, were armed and cloathed in the same manner as the guides; and that if he were not extremely mistaken, he had seen the very same persons in the market-place of Sestre. We were told since, that these robbers are the very guides themselves, who accompanying travellers out of town, do afterwards by a shorter way get before them, placing themselves in ambush near the road by which they are sure they must pass, and never fail of robbing those who have refused to make use of them or of their companions.

By ill-luck for our father Benedictine, he had but lately received a bill of exchange at Turin, and was not likely to receive another till he came to Rome. This forced us to part company, because I was not in a condition to bear his expense, and my own too. He resolved therefore to take his journey the best way he could to Rome, through the monasteries of all sorts of orders and hospitals also, necessity forcing him thereto. I saw him afterwards at Rome, where I found him not wholly recovered yet from the miseries he had suf-

fered since our parting. He gave me a particular and full account of the hospitals at which he called in his journey, what they were, and the entertainment he had met with in them. I have heard Roman Catholics often reproachfully object to Protestants, that they have no hospitals amongst them to entertain strangers; and confounding this kind of public hospitality with charity, boldly conclude, that they are not charitable, and consequently no true children of the church. It is a mark of a weak cause, to lay hold of every thing it meets with to support itself, which notwithstanding, commonly contributes most to its overthrow. To defeat this pretended charity of Catholics, it will be sufficient to relate to you what this father told me, and what I have learned of some other travellers, which I intend in part to make the subject of this letter.

I shall tell you first of all in general, Sir, that all the ancient hospitals of Italy owe their foundation to the holy places of Rome and Loretto. The pilgrimages to these some ages ago, by reason of a more universal deluge of superstition, were much more in vogue than they are at present; though it were to be wished they were much less than they are. A man was scarcely reputed a good Christian except he had been at Rome. And the Popes perceiving how much this vast concourse did augment their revenues, and rendered their capital city rich and wealthy, found a way to oblige confessors to enjoin their penitents a journey thither, for the expiation of the greatest sins. They afterwards made reserved cases of most of these kind of sins, whereof we find still at this day a great number in the Bull, entitled, *In cœna domini*, reserving to themselves alone the power of absolving them; so that in these cases, the parties concerned must either go to Rome, or else resolve never to enter into Paradise.

It is true, that at present they have bethought themselves of a way to spare men this trouble, which is, of sending thither a good sum of money: with this they content themselves now; for I am sure, it is not the person they desire, but his purse, which at any time will supply his absence. And forasmuch as amongst the great number of pilgrims that flocked thither out of devotion, or of necessity, for the expiation of their sins, there were many poor people that had not wherewith to defray their charges in public inns; many rich persons, moved with compassion towards these poor wretches, founded hospitals for their entertainment, where they received both lodging and diet; or at whatsoever hour of the day they called there, had an alms given them, which they call *La passade;* according as the foundation was more or less endowed, such was the alms, in some places more, in others less.

We met with many hospitals in Italy, that were founded towards the end of the 10th, or the beginning of the 11th century; the cause of which was a false opinion that was uppermost then, that the day of judgment was near, grounded upon a forged tradition, which is preserved still to this day in the Church of Rome; that Christ being asked by his apostles, how long this outward world would last? He aswered them, a thousand years and upwards. So that the most part of Christian princes, and great lords, about this time took a journey to Rome, founded hospitals for the poor pilgrims, and several abbeys, into which many of them retired themselves, in expectation of the dreadful day of judgment. As for the hospitals they founded, the care and administration of them was committed to priests, as being the men who think themselves concerned in all pious legacies, and who very readily take upon them the care of those places, where they find a

plentiful current of devotional-money. It was too much their interest, not to encourage so favourable beginings, and therefore were not wanting any more than at this day, constantly to frequent the houses of widows and rich persons, to induce them by their last wills, to enlarge the revenues of their hospitals, of which they were constituted the stewards and overseers ; insomuch, that in a little time these hospitals became prodigiously rich. It remains now only, that we take a view of the use which is made of them at present, that thence we may judge, whether from them a good argument can be drawn in favour of those of the Roman communion ; to prove that their charity so far exceeds that of the Protestants, as they would fain make people believe ; or whether indeed we have not much more reason to infer the contrary ?

Our Benedictine, by sad experience, was in a condition of giving me some information concerning this matter : he told me, that after he had parted with me at Luca, which is a small republic, he took his journey on foot by Alto Passo, which is a very ancient and famous hospital, founded by a queen of France, eight miles distant from Luca. He could not exactly tell me what were the revenues of that hospital ; but that this was the law of it, that all strangers, of what rank or quality soever, rich or poor, were to be received and entertained there three days together, according to their quality ; but that at present it admits of none besides the priests and monks that pass by that way, and to other travellers they give a loaf of half a pound weight, and a pint of wine, at the gate ; and before they can be admitted to this favour, they must produce several passports and letters to prove themselves pilgrims, for want of which our father was in great danger of being shut out and rejected ; but instead thereof he boldly

produced his letter of obedience. The priest who examined him, seeing that the letter was writ in Latin, in which probably he was not over skilful, let it pass, saying, that he perceived it was a travelling letter of the apostolical nuncio at Turin; so that by this shift he was at last admitted.

He told me, that his entertainment there was very tolerable, and that upon his enquiry into the manner of the government of the hospital, an old servant of the house told him, there were twenty five officers that were intendants over it, some of them with the titles of guardians, administrators, and receivers; and others with the names of the first, second, and third officers of the pantry and butlery, who were all rich clergymen, who divided amongst themselves almost all the revenues of that hospital, there being but a very inconsiderable part of it reserved for those few charitable deeds that are exercised there. From thence he came to Pesche, which is a very fine city, a small day's journey from thence, where there is a vast number of convents and monasteries. He went and presented himself to several of them, to procure himself a lodging; but every where they shut the door upon him; for the Italian monks are very pitiless, and never give any alms to strangers.—They have an artifice amongst them to excuse their refusal of poor passengers, which is this: all the monks and brothers have orders to tell them that their abbot, guardian, or prior is not in the monastery; and if you happen by chance to meet with the men themselves, they tell you, that the steward, butler, or some other officer that has the purse, is gone abroad. By this means they make the poor travellers lose all patience, forcing them to depart without the least relief. Our monk being thus refused admittance every where, was fain to seek out an hospital, which he found very different from that of Alto Passo; for the bad

entertainment he there met with, though it was with much more difficulty that he was admitted, because his letter mentioned, that he was sent to Rome about business, and not upon the account of devotion. For though, for the most part, they understood but little Latin, yet they are so wise as to put travellers upon shewing them these two words in their letters, *Ex Devotione*. Two hermits of those Italian strollers, who spent their life in running from one hospital to another, having perceived that our monk had been somewhat rudely used by reason of his letter, came to him after supper, offering to remedy the matter, and to supply the defect of his letter, so that he should never run the hazard of exposing himself to the like affront for the time to come. The way was this: they promised to draw up for him a letter of pilgrimage, and to affix to it the seal of the archbishop of Lyons, which they had counterfeited. So that the question now only was about a piece of money they demanded of our Benedictine for this seasonable service; who having none to give, offered them his Breviary. The one of them absolutely refused it, saying, that that was a bad implement to carry with one to hospitals; that it was long since they had been happily robbed of theirs, and by this means were excused from a tedious repeating of them, according to the decree of the sacred congregation at Rome to that purpose; *Amisso vel ablato breviario, non tenetur presbyter officio;* a priest is not bound to the duty of saying his breviary, in case he hath lost, or is robbed of it. They added, that not long since they had seen a priest expelled an hospital, because having a breviary about him, he had forgot, or neglected to say the office before supper. But his companion accepted of the bargain, saying, he would make it his business to rid himself of it, at the first bookseller's shop he came to. Thus the

Benedictine at the same time procured two advantages, the one of being rid of the trouble of saying his prayers; the other, of having got a sure key to give him entrance into all hospitals, and this by means of a counterfeit letter of pilgrimage; which these two hermits were ready, for their money, to give to any that did desire it.

The father being thus provided, boldly prosecuted his journey through all the cities of Italy, till he came to Rome, having been every where received into the hospitals without any difficulty. But he protested to me, that if it were in his power to inflict a severe punishment upon all the guardians and administrators of them, he thought that in so doing he should render a most acceptable service to God, as well as to all poor pilgrims; because, (said he) it is a most lamentable thing to see how they treat them; what they give them to eat does not amount to two pence charges for each person; and this too in such a nasty and slovenly manner, that it turns one's stomach; whilst, in the mean time, those wretched priests engross and sweep all the money into their own coffers, to maintain their coach and horses, with the magnificent titles they take to themselves of high Almoners, Grand Administrators, and Grand Priors of the hospital. It is an infamous thing to see how they lodge poor strangers; there are about twenty or thirty beds in a great room, where they lie two and two, or three and three in a bed, according as they are stocked with company. The beds are all rotten and spoiled, and crawling with vermin, and most of them without any sheets. The hospitals, indeed, are well endowed; but it is the malicious contrivance of those who have the care of the administration of them, to give their visitants the worst of entertainment they can devise, to turn their stomachs from ever coming there again; and, indeed, a

man must be reduced to extreme necessity before he can resolve on a second visit.

The Benedictine gave a more particular account of an hospital, which is in the hands of the Dominicans of Viterbo. These fathers employed their utmost endeavours with the magistrates of the city to procure the direction of it; promising that they would make it their business to take a particular care for pilgrims, by faithfully employing the revenues thereof for their use and relief; whereupon at last their request was granted them. But since this, they have taken up all the best part of the building for themselves, and lodge the pilgrims that visit them in one of the cellars that belong to the house. Our Benedictine arriving here, met with a company of seven or eight pilgrims beside himself, who were altogether locked up in the cellar, without giving them either meat or drink, or beds to lie upon; and left them thus shut up till ten o'clock the next morning, at which time the door was opened for them. The father Dominicans, seeing them in great confusion coming forth from their miserable lodging, scoffed at them, asking them whether they had lined their insides well, and been lodged at their ease, desiring them at their return from Rome to call that way, for that all things should be in readiness to give them a goodly entertainment. All the world knows, that there is nothing of more dangerous consequence in Italy than to offend a Dominican; because, having the inquisition in their hands, they commonly make excellent use of it, to avenge the least affront that is offered them. Wherefore these poor wretches were fain to slink away in silence, without as much as daringto reply one word to their villainous scoffing at them, after having treated them so outrageously. The famous and rich hospital of Loretto, to which vast and immense donations have been given in favour of pil-

grims, is for all that little better served than those we have just now mentioned.

To this purpose I shall relate to you a passage whereof myself was witness when I was at Loretto. I was walking in the great place which is between the church and that hospital, with two French priests who had lodged there the night before. The guardians, it seems, are obliged to ring a bell to gather the pilgrims together before supper, that none of them may be absent. But these wretches, who have no more religion in them than dogs, and whose only desire is to defraud and pinch the poor pilgrims, had on purpose omitted ringing of the bell, as they often do. The French priests about six o'clock retired to the hospital, where they demanded of them why they did not come sooner, and that supper time was past. They excused themselves by alleging that they had not rung the bell for them. But they falsely and impudently maintained that the bell had been rung; so that it was not possible for them to obtain so much as a piece of bread for themselves that night. The next morning these poor priests were so fearful of being served the same trick, (for in that hospital they are obliged to give their visitants supper and lodging for three nights together,) that they continued from three o'clock in the afternoon until evening under the belfrry. The guardians, seeing that it was impossible to put them by their suppers, called them softly (about six o'clock) to come into the hall to supper; which they very honestly refused to do till they had rung the bell, to give warning to the rest of the pilgrims. The guardians, though enraged at this, yet durst not but do it; but avenged themselves another way, by giving them very bad wine.

In other parts of Italy they make use of other devices in their hospitals, to affright pilgrims

from coming at them. At Parma and Turin they oblige them (all wearied as they are,) to go in procession throughout the whole city, in the sight of all men, and to sing long litanies; which makes persons who have the least spark of generosity, or those who are naturally more shamefaced than others, rather expose themselves to lie in the streets, yea, to perish for hunger, than to visit such kind of hospitals, where they must subject themselves to such odious laws. Others make it their business to spoil and deface all the passports of strangers, with great ugly black marks they make upon them, as a sign they have been entertained in such and such hospitals. Now persons who are any thing careful of preserving their honour in their own country, and to keep their passports neat and clean, will take care how they present themselves to such places as those, where charity is so infamously and ignominiously administered. In the mean time, by these scandalous fetches they make shift to reduce their guests to a very small number; for the fewer visitants they have in a year, the greater is their dividend at the year's end. Others have the impudence to make them gain that by their own labour which was destined for them out of charity. And indeed generally every where, if they be not there precisely at the set time, which ordinarily is an hour before night, they are irrecoverably shut out of the hospital, and it is impossible, either by prayers or tears to procure any entrance. Others again treat their guests very rudely in their discourse, and with the greatest disdain and contempt imaginable. In a word, charity is every where administered in so uncharitable and misbecoming a manner, that if the benefactors of those hospitals could once return to life, and have the possession of the goods they formerly bequeathed to those places, I do persuade myself, that seeing these

horrid abuses that are practised, they would take heed of undertaking the like foundations for time to come.

The father told me that he had been in no place better treated than at a new hospital that was building at Montefiascone, three days journey from Rome. It was about five or six years ago that the priests of that place had been persuading the nobility and citizens of that small city to contribute to this foundation. They had already procured a considerable revenue, by the pious legacies of some ladies of quality, and some annual rents the city had granted towards it. The Benedictine, seeing the good entertainment they had given him, said smilingly to the priests who had the direction of the house, that he was very well satisfied with the good entertainment he had received; that he prayed God to preserve in them this spirit of charity for the poor; and that he heartily wished, for the good of their souls, that they might not one day become like others, by sharing the revenues of the hospital amongst themselves, and neglecting and abusing the members of Jesus Christ, as they do.

Many pilgrims have assured me, that it is the greatest misery in the world to take up one's lodging in any one of the old hospitals, notwithstanding that they are the most richly endowed; and that in the new hospitals they were well enough entertained, because the priests had not yet divided the revenue amongst themselves. They do like the gardeners, who suffer the fruit to hang on the tree, till it is come to its full growth and maturity, and then gather it, and make their profit of it; or like the merchants that traffic in company, who do not divide the purse till it be full. All these external practices and shews of piety and devotion, visibly terminating in self-interest, make it evident beyond dispute that they

proceeded from no other principles than avarice and hypocrisy.

You may probably object to me here, Sir, that the Italians, whom I have elsewhere represented to you as men of wit and understanding, must needs be very simple in suffering themselves to be persuaded to bestow their goods upon such foundations as these, considering the great abuse of them. To this, Sir, I shall answer, that the priests in all countries have a powerful ascendant over the spirits of the people, and that this, joined with the doctrine of the Church of Rome, which is, that the prayers of pilgrims are of a particular efficacy with God to deliver souls out of purgatory; and with the practice observed in these hospitals, of obliging the pilgrims at night to make long prayers for the souls of their deceased benefactors, and causing mass to be said for them in the chapels belonging to the said hospitals, is a powerful motive, considering the false belief wherein they are engaged, to persuade them to it. Moreover these priests are very dexterous in divulging every where, that they are very faithful in the administration of their alms, that they are very careful in giving good entertainment to their pilgrims, even so far as to contribute, of their own money, to defray the charges they are at for provisions. But it is evident enough, that by a mental restriction, they must understand this of provisions for themselves, though before God they cannot by this means excuse themselves from lying.

There were formerly many more hospitals in Italy than there are at present; every monastery had its hospital. St. Odon, Abbot of Clugny, seeing that these hospitals were all in vogue, and that it was a kind of devotion that made a great noise in the world, would not in this point come behind any seculars. He divided the vast revenues of his abbey into three parts:—the first was

for the abbot and the entertainment of strangers of note, that came to the monastery:—the second for the maintenance of the monks, which was called the conventual portion; and the third part for the relief of the poor, and the entertainment of pilgrims, whose feet the abbot himself, as an effect of his humility, was pleased to wash. Almost all the abbots of France, Germany, and Italy followed this example; and, in like manner, made a tri-partition of the revenues of their abbies. But this their abundant charity was not of any long continuance; for soon after, tha twhich had been given with one hand was taken away with the other. The share of the poor was lost, or rather confounded with those of the abbot and the monks. At present there are no more of these hospitals to be found in Italy, excepting one at Mount Cassim, and another at the great Camaldule, where they entertain pilgrims. The Chartreux monks have also another in the duchy of Milan, at the monastery of Pavia. But it is not to their charity strangers are beholden for this convenience, but to that of Galeacius, Viscount Duke of Milan, their founder, who would have this monastery, which he had endowed with a vast revenue, to be a place of public reception and entertainment for all, whether rich or poor. The fathers of this foundation have since done their utmost to rid themselves of this hospitality, under the specious pretext that it was a great disturbance to their solitude. But the lords and great men of that duchy, who by the charter of the foundation are to be splendidly entertained there, with all their train and equipage, as often as they pass that way, found themselves too much interested in this their petition, and therefore have always opposed it with all the vigour imaginable; so that they are still forced to continue the same, though sore against their wills.

It is a thing but too well known in Italy, and avowed by all, that their clergy are extremely wanting in this great duty and distinguishing Christian badge of charity. It is an observation I made myself, that the poor, who are over and above persuaded of this truth by their own experience, do seldom or never beg any alms of them. As for the regular clergy, the Benedictine told me, that from the time of our parting, he had presented himself to all the monasteries of his order he met with, to obtain a lodging with them, but that scarce ever had they been willing to receive him. The common answer he had from them was, that there was an hospital in the city, to which he had best address himself for entertainment; and that when he came thither, they absolutely refused him entrance; telling him, there was a monastery of his order in the city, and that it was more proper for him to seek a lodging there. Thus this poor monk, seeing himself sometimes rejected on all sides, lamented his sad condition, occasioned by the scandalous uncharitableness of the clergy, and his own brethren of the same order. He added, that if it were in his power he would abolish all these hospitals, as well as all pilgrimages. For (said he) as these hospitals are most scandalously administered, so neither can any thing be imagined more abominable than the persons that take up their lodgings in them; amongst a score of them it is hard to find one that is come from his own country with a design to visit the holy places; being, for the most part, a company of vagabonds who make it their business every year to go the round of Italy. They commonly pass the summer in the Alps, and then begin their journey in autumn, spending their winter at Rome, Naples, or Calabria; and in the spring begin their round anew, in order to return to their summer quarters in the mountain. The way they take to live is

this:—they beg in the day-time, go from one farm to another; leap hedges, rob orchards, and steal fowl they meet with in the high way, or in some of the back courts of country houses, or whatever else they meet with. After this good day's work, they retire towards evening to some neighbouring village where they know there is an hospital. Many of them travel up and down thus with their whole families, trailing their wives and children along with them. These generally profess themselves to be new converts; that formerly they were either Jews or Protestants; but, having abjured their errors, they have thereby reduced themselves into so miserable a condition for the love of Jesus Christ. To this purpose, they shew you very fair and plausible letters of credence, with fair great seals annexed to them. I have sometimes diverted myself with questioning this kind of people about the principles of Judaism, or the faith of Protestants, but they were never able to answer any thing to the purpose. Perceiving this, I came nearer to them, and demanded of them how they came by these fair commendatory letters; whereupon some of them freely owned to me that they bought them with their money of an abbot living at Turin, who made a trade and livelihood of it. That for this purpose he was furnished with all manner of seals, and could counterfeit all writing hands. And as for themselves, they ingenuously confessed they had never been either Jews or Protestants, but that they made use of this artifice to induce people to a greater degree of charity towards them.

Besides these, we find many other sorts of hospital-haunters, that are not a jot better than those I have now mentioned. Some of them drag great chains after them, and iron manacles, declaring themselves to have been slaves in Turkey, from

whence they were miraculously delivered by some vows they made to Rome, or to our Lady of Loretto. But if any one take them to task about those remote countries, they can answer nothing that is pertinent; and besides, it is notorious that they buy their chains of the blacksmiths, which many Italians have assured me to have been eye-witnesses of. Moreover, they are a sort of people so dissolute in their manners, and so debauched, that were it true indeed that the blessed Virgin had wrought a miracle to deliver them from their bondage, she ought by another to return them thither again.

Another sort of pilgrims, well known in these hospitals, are a kind of hermits, of the nature of those two I mentioned before, who spend their time in strolling from one place of devotion to another, from Rome to Loretto, and from Loretto to Rome, leading a most scandalous life. These are the men, who without any permission from their bishops to lead an hermetic life, have taken up the habit of themselves. I remember that at Lyons the Vicar-general caused one of these men to be seized, who in prison confessed that he himself had given the habit to seventeen vagabond rogues like himself, for three crowns a-piece; in consideration of which he had also furnished them with cloth cut out, and sewed their gowns and cowls himself, and given them counterfeit letters to wander throughout Germany and Italy. Now it is observable, that the guardians of hospitals do commonly give a better reception to those sort of cattle, than to passengers or pilgrims, because they know their company is very apt to turn other people's stomachs from coming to them.

These are the several sorts and divisions of hospital-mongers, which houses being, besides, ordered after the manner I have informed you; judge, I pray you, Sir, whether the Church of

Rome has reason to be so huffey and proud of her pilgrims and hospitals, and to reproach the Protestants for wanting such goodly ornaments, and testimonies of their charity? For my part, I am firm in opinion, that the Protestant method in this point is by far the better. They have very wisely retrenched these sort of pilgrimages, being convinced that it is much better for a man to shut himself up in his closet, there to pray in secret to his heavenly Father, than to run up and down to pray to God and the saints in public places, as the Romanists do. They know that God has not tied up holiness neither to time or place; and that it is a great piece of folly to found places of entertainment for vagabonds, who are for the most part either lazy drones or wicked villains, who ought rather to be shut up in houses of correction, and made to work for their living, than to leave them at their liberty, which they make such ill use of. As for what concerns strangers and travellers, if they happen to fall into some necessity, there are not wanting in Protestant countries, charitably to assist them in their needs, especially if they are known to be honest people. And as for the poor and necessitous that dwell in cities, the parishes to which they belong take notice of what their wants are, and take care to supply them. This, Sir, as far as I can judge, is a far better regulated charity, and consequently also more pleasing to God, and such as was praised in the primitive times of the church.

It may be you will tell me, Sir, that the pilgrims of the Church of Rome, are not all of them such pitiful wretches as I have now described, but that there are a vast number of persons of quality, of different ranks and conditions, who travel to Rome and Loretto upon the account of devotion, in imitation of St. Paul, St. Pelagia, and Eustochium. Noble Roman ladies, who un-

dertook a Jerusalem voyage, to visit the holy places there, according to the testimony of St. Jerome, and that such as these are the persons whose zeal your church extremely boasts itself of. I will not deny, Sir, but that indeed I have seen many persons of quality going in pilgrimage to Rome, and other places of devotion that are most in vogue in Italy, neither would I altogether disapprove of their design, could I find that the objects to which they pay their devotions, were in any degree worthy of them, and that they did it in a decent and edifying manner. But, sincerely, to tell you my opinion, I could never see any thing in all Italy, that deserved a man's putting of himself to so great charges, except only to see its fair cities, and the masterpieces of art and nature it contains. But in this case it is curiosity, and not devotion, that puts men upon undertaking that journey. Besides, Sir, the manner of your rich people going a pilgrimage is so extravagant, and so fraught with staring libertinism and licentiousness, that in truth, they had much better keep at home, and honour God in their families, than to quit them, as they do, to satisfy their lusts under a cloak of devotion, to the great scandal of all good and sober people. I question not, but you will be of my mind, as soon as you shall have read the account I intend to give you in my next letter, wherein I shall treat of my journey to Loretto. For the present, because I have not quitted Luca, where I parted with my Benedictine, who has given me occasion to write what I have done of hospitals; I shall only tell you, before I part with this city, without giving you the description of it, that being no part of my design, that as I was one day coming forth from my inn, I was extremely surprised, to hear the people in the street swearing and blaspheming the holy name of Jesus Christ. There was a great throng

of people gathered together, who looked upon those that did so, without witnessing the least horror, for hearing such execrable blasphemies. I demanded of them with some indignation, why they suffered them to talk at such a rate? They mildly answered me, that I was mistaken, and that they did neither swear or blaspheme, but that it was only a particular quarrel, about a piece of money of the value of a shilling, or thereabouts, which at Luca they call a Jesus Christ. The magistrates of this city, caused this money to be coined in honour of a miraculous crucifix, which is kept in their cathedral, which (they say) did either weep, or speak, or bleed, these being the ordinary miracles of these crucifixes. The figure of Jesus Christ hanging on the cross, is stamped upon this coin, which, therefore, they call a Christ. By which means, when they are at play, or upon quarrels arising about payments, the adorable name of our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, is not only very frequently taken in vain, but also outraged and blasphemed, as those wretches, whom I have just mentioned, did for one of these pieces. I have seen another sort of money at Bononia, called a Madonnin, that is to say, an Our Lady, or a Virgin Mary, which is of the value of sixpence at Bononia, upon occasion of which the same inconveniencies do probably happen in the like disputes. Thus, we see, that an imprudent devotion ordinarily terminates in a great impiety. The Queen of Sweden having seen one of these pieces of money, said smilingly to the Cardinal of Luca, that the Italians would have done much better, to have stamped a coin, and bestowed the name of God upon it; intimating, that gold and silver were the God of Italy, there being no people in the world that worshipped it with more idolatry, and yet that are more lazy and careless in the gaining of it.

In all their churches they shew us a prodigious number of relics of saints, as in all the rest of Italy, the most of which are certainly ridiculous. I will not stop at present to give you a catalogue of them, but will pass on to Florence, where I shall have occasion to entertain you with the Great Devotion, that is so much in vogue and credit at at a church called the *Anonciade*, or Annunciation. The original of the devotion take as follows: A painter having been employed to make a picture of the Blessed Virgin, in the posture wherein the Romish tradition tells us she was, when the angel Gabriel was sent to her, to acquaint her with the Incarnation of the Word; that is, in her chamber on her knees, reading the prophecy of Isaiah: the painter had finished all other parts of the picture, except one, to wit, the Virgin's face, which he had reserved for his last task; but being at a loss what idea to follow, in representing to the life so excellent a creature; and despairing ever to find any thing in his art of sufficient perfection to reach this height, he in his trouble and discomposure of thought, fell asleep in the church where he was at work; and awakening three or four hours after, (O strange prodigy, and well deserving the wonder of all men!) he found that which had so much perplexed him happily finished, and much better than ever he could hope to have done it himself; whereupon he began to cry out aloud, a miracle! a miracle! highly averring that an angel sent from heaven had done the work whilst he was asleep. The friars of the convent where he wrought, finding their interest in the thing, ranged themselves on his side, so that in a moment the Devotion took fire, and the concourse of people to their church was so great, and has ever since continued with such extraordinary success, as hath made it at this day one of the richest of all Italy; and the convent of friars one of the best

endowed. The reflections I have made on this picture are, that on many accounts all this might be no more than a mere cheat or mistake. For first of all, some unknown person, or rather friar of skill in that art, entering by chance into the chapel where the painter was at work, and finding him asleep, might make use of that opportunity, and having finished the work, retire himself before the painter awoke. Secondly, we may suppose that the painter to make himself talked of, and to gain himself the credit and reputation of a good man, might have invented this lie himself. Or lastly, we may conceive that the friars of the convent, upon consideration of a good piece of money, might have induced him to have published this lie, to make their advantage of it. What I alledge here, that might have been, is not done with this intent, as if I had a mind by all manner of ways to disgrace and discredit this pretended miracle, by supposing it a piece of forgery. I know it is the character of a disingenuous and malicious spirit, to put a bad construction upon a matter that admits a favourable one, and verily, I would not for all the world expose myself to that reproach. But the reason of what I have said concerning this matter is, that I am otherwise satisfied on good grounds, that the point in question is a manifest and palpable falsehood For first of all, if it were an angel, as is pretended, that had painted this face of the Virgin, as the work of an angel is far more perfect than that of a man, it will follow, that this picture, at least as to the mixture and laying on of the colours, must have far excelled all the pieces of Caratche, Guido, Rhin, or any other of the most famous painters of Italy; and in the mean time we see the contrary, and that it does not at all exceed the rest of the pictures finished by the painter himself; which made a traveller, who eyed it very well, to say, that the

angel-limner must have been but a blockhead and bungler at his art, to draw such rude and curious strokes. But besides this, we have another argument to convince the Romanists, that this is a false supposition; which is, that this portraiture of the Blessed Virgin, bears no resemblance at all with those other pictures of the Virgin, which they pretend to have been drawn by the hand of St. Luke himself. The face here is round, fair, and ruddy, with lively and brisk eyes, and a low smooth forehead; whereas that painted by St. Luke is long and swarthy, Egyptian-like, with an humble and modest look, and a high and prominent forehead, and which has nothing of that charming beauty of the Blessed Virgin, they so highly magnify when they speak of her. Wherefore we must conclude, that either this angel was mistaken, or that St. Luke was a great ignoramus in the art of painting; which notwithstanding they tell us he was skilful in, to perfection; for, without doubt, the one or the other must have been fouly mistaken. To attribute this mistake to the angel, would be to derogate extremely, and against all reason, from the transcendent excellence of those blessed spirits; and to accuse St. Luke, would destroy their own tradition; which they ought not so far to vilify and debase, as to make it give way to the particular testimony of a silly painter, who may be a liar, as well as so many others; I speak of him who drew this picture of the Annunciation. Lastly, it might also as well be alledged, that the devil, for the encouragement and increase of superstition, might have had a finger in the intrigue, as so perremptorily to assert, that it was an angel of light; though to speak the truth, this is not very rational neither, for the devil is too cunning to have done his work so much at random, and would, without doubt, rather have borrowed his idea from the picture of Sancta Maria Magiore

at Rome. However, the Popes have declared it to be a truth, they have approved the matter, and have issued their bulls for the authorising of it; and thundered out their excommunications against those who should be so fool-hardy to doubt of it; being the same that other Popes have done in favour of the picture of St. Luke. This devotion has procured vast treasures to the fathers of this convent, called Serviti. The Great Duke of Tuscany repaired thither every evening to say his prayers, whilst I was at Florence, and it is the common rendezvous of strangers, that have a mind to see this court. He every day gave great alms to the poor at the door of the church, who all of them (as I am told) were persons very well to live, though (to induce people more to compassion) they kept themselves covered with nothing but rags. They have taken such firm possession of this post, that they will not suffer any strange beggar to mingle with them. By occasion of mentioning these beggars, and that you may somewhat the better apprehend the powerful virtue of the holy image, and the miracles the Virgin continually works in favour of those who repair thither to their adorations, I will here relate to you a miracle which they cried along the streets of Florence, as a thing that had lately happened, which print my curiosity prompted me to buy. The story seemed to me very gallant, and though it be something long, yet I hope the recital will not seem tedious to you.

A gentleman of one of the best families of Florence, was fallen from a flourishing condition, by means of some cross blasts of fortune, to extreme poverty. That which greatly added to his affliction was, that he had two grown daughters that were not yet provided for; his only recourse in this miserable condition, was to the Mother of God. And to enter himself the better into her

favour, he made a vow to continue all his life-long very devout to her miraculous image of the *Annunciade:* to this purpose he rose very early every morning, and went to say his prayers in the church-porch, before the doors were opened. After he had continued his devotion thus for a long time, the Blessed Virgin thought good at last to hear his prayers, and to send him some relief. Accordingly she inspired two blindmen, of the number of those who always kept about the door of the church, to rise sooner than ordinary, to take their stations in the church-porch: being arrived there, one of them began to tell his companion, how much he was beholden to the miraculous Virgin, for that from extreme poverty, he had in a short time attained to competent riches by the alms he had received there; and that beside the money in silver he had left at his lodging, he had two hundred pistoles in gold quilted in the crown of his hat. His blind comrade having heard his discourse, told him, that for his part, he did not in the least envy his good luck, as being much more obliged to the miraculous image, and that he had quilted in his hat no less than five hundred pistoles in gold. The gentleman, who was near to them at his prayers, without making the least noise, that might discover him to be there, having heard them discoursing at this rate, and seeing so fair an opportunity offered him of enriching himself, very softly drew near to the two blindmen, and very dexterously took off both their hats at once, retiring some paces backward. The blindmen being extremely surprised hereat, and each of them believing his companion had done the feat, demanded their hats of one another, and proceeded to such a rage, that handling their crutches, they discharged several hearty strokes upon one another's heads; and without doubt, had killed one another, if people had not come in to part

them. Whilst they were thus hotly engaged, the gentleman went off, and finding some scruple in himself for what he had done, he goes the same day to the Cardinal Archbishop of Florence, to whom he told all that had passed. The Archbishop having heard the relation, did fully approve of what he had done; and told him, that he was not at all obliged to make any restitution, forasmuch as it was apparent, that the Virgin had visibly assisted him in the whole course of that affair, in consideration of the devotion he bore to her miraculous portraiture, and ordered, that for the comfort of the faithful, it should be printed and published throughout the city of Florence. This same story has since been printed anew, in a book which is very current in Italy, and has for its title, *L'Utile col Dolci*, or, Profit with Pleasure.

You see here, Sir, a very pleasant miracle, wherein the Virgin, to pleasure one of her servants, makes a robber of him, and who, as such, ought to be punished according to the laws. For by what means soever these poor blind men might have picked up this money, however theirs it was, and had been given them for alms. But if we suppose this to be a story invented at pleasure, I am astonished that a cardinal archbishop should ever cause it to be printed; and that the Inquisition, which in all other matters appear so exact and scrupulous, should license the impression of it in the book before mentioned. People are so cloyed with miracles in Italy, that except they contain something romantic and fabulous, they are scarcely taken notice of. This is that which makes the Italians, who, not without great reason are accused of coining new ones every day, to have a great care to set them out with such rare and surprising, or such merry and pleasing circumstances, that it is very diverting to read them, or hear them related. I may have an occasion to

give you a more particular account hereof in one of my Letters, and therefore shall at present pass over in silence the many miracles of this famous church of the *Annunciade*, to give you an account of some places of devotion, which are not far distant from the city of Florence, and which I had the curiosity to go and visit.

It is amongst the high mountains of the Apenine, that we meet with three famous deserts, at a day's journey distance from each other, where as many heads of different orders had their beginning. The first of these is Camaldule, the second Valombrosa, and the third Mont Alverne. Of these, Camaldule has by way of pre-eminence been called the Holy Desert, and is certainly one of the most desert places nature can produce. St. Romualdus obtained this place of an earl, called Maldule, from whence it took its name of Camaldule, as being a kind of abreviation of Campmaldule, or the field of Maldule. Hither it was then, that he retired to lead a penitent life; and having by his example engaged some disciples to join with him, he built there a monastery upon a very high mountain, in an interval lying between two tops or prominences thereof; and afterwards being desirous of a greater solitude, he retired to one of those tops, which is a place almost inaccessible; where he instituted a kind of double order, one of monks, and the other of solitaries or hermits; but under the same habit and rule, excepting only some particular constitutions to the one, with reference to the hermetic life; and to the others, for the monastic. The monks dwelt in the monastery he had built below, and the solitaries retired with him to the top, which at present is called the holy desert. I arrived at this monastery in the beginning of October. From Florence it is in a manner a continual up-hill thither, and from thence one may

discover that great and lofty city, with the country all about it, which affords a most pleasing prospect. These fathers have always preserved hospitality amongst them, and to this day entertain all strangers that come thither, and treat them according to their quality for three days together. Forasmuch as there is neither inn, nor any houses near it, I went and presented myself to the abbey, where I was very civilly received. I found here three Florentine gentlemen, to whose company I joined myself, and at night we were served at table with eggs and fish, without any superfluity; but with a mediocrity well becoming the religious state of these fathers, with which I was much more edified than I had been at the Citeaux in France, where the abbot treated us with so much profusion and excess. We acquainted them over night, that we designed the next day to go to the Sacred Desert; and accordingly they called us up at five o'clock the next morning, and made us sit down to eat at six. I was extremely surprised to see they had prepared breakfast so early, when none of us had the least appetite to meat: but they told us, that we must force ourselves to eat as well as we could, because the air was so piercing and cold in climbing up to the top of the mountain, that we should never be able to bear it, if we attempted it with empty stomachs: moreover, that we were to prepare ourselves to clamber on foot for six miles together on the rocks, and to march through the snow, before we could come to the top of the Holy Desert, and that there they never gave any meat to any person, to avoid disturbing their solitude; so that we should be forced to come down from thence by the same way to the monastery, there to take a second refreshment. We suffered ourselves therefore to be persuaded, and after we had eaten, we parted from the monastery about

seven o'clock, and walked on towards the top, always compassing the mountain, in a continued forest of tall fir-trees.

All these rocks are full of little springs, from whence issueth a very clear water, whose rivulets disperse themselves all over the way by which we went; so that one cannot climb very high without marching in the water, which is very troublesome. These waters meeting together form a considerable torrent, which we passed and repassed upon great fir trees laid over in the form of bridges. We arrived about noon at the top, after having marched two miles through the snow. This was in the month of October; but the top of the mountain is so cold, that when it rains below, it almost continually snows here on high. We found the snow very high there, and had been for eight days; so that at a distance we could see nothing but the upper part of the church, and the tile-covering of the cells; we counted about sixty of them, which are about twenty paces distant from one another, and taken altogether, form a little town. Every cell hath several rooms and a garden. They shewed us that of St. Romuald, which one of the hermits dwelt in. We asked them why they bore no better respect to the cell of their happy founder, but left it to one of their religious to live in? They told us that this was the only way to preserve it against the moisture which the place was subject to; and that otherwise the wood would rot, and the cell be in danger of falling down. They shewed us the cell of a venerable hermit, who (they assured us) had not stirred thence for forty years together, and who still lived there in perpetual silence, not so much as speaking a word to any one. They put in his meat to him through a little window, which he took with great sobriety and moderation. These solitaries esteemed him a saint, for they

value silence above all other virtues; which gave me occasion to demand of those who were ordered to accompany us, what kind of thing this great virtue of silence was, and how they defined it? They answered that it was to be silent with men, in order to speak to God; whereupon I replied, that it seemed to me to be better defined thus:—to be silent or to speak, when one ought; and that I could not approve of the use they had introduced amongst them of speaking to one another by signs. We ourselves indeed had but newly experienced the inconveniences of it, at our first entrance into the Holy Desert; for having found the court gate open, we went in to refresh us; but when we were entered, not knowing which way to betake ourselves, we drew near to some of these solitaries, who were busy in removing the snow to make a passage. We desired them to be so kind as to tell us to whom we might address ourselves to take a view of the place; but not so much as one of them opened their mouths to give us a word in answer. Some of them made signs to us with their hands and feet, and others with their brooms and shovels. We believed at first they were fools, or that they had a mind to drive us out again; but at last we apprehended that they made signs to us to return to the gate, and there speak with the porters, with whom we happily met. I immediately told these porters, that it appeared to me very strange, that God having given to men a tongue and a mouth, wherewith to express their thoughts, some persons, instead of acknowledging this advantage which God had given them above brute beasts, by a good and discreet use thereof, should undertake to make use of their hands and feet to express themselves, like those that are dumb-born, or that have their tongues cut out. That at the best, this seemed to me very improper, and very far from

appearing to be a virtue fit to make men good and holy. They answered me, that these were mysteries hid and unknown to seculars, and only revealed by God to solitaries and perfect souls, who knew the excellence of them. The sins (proceeded he) of the men of the world, are gross sins, such as covetousness, envy, luxury, blasphemy, &c. but as for us, our greatest sins are, when sometimes, by frailty, we break our observance of silence; to walk with too much haste and precipitation; to cast some curious (though innocent) looks; to be slovenly in our habits; to have preferred sometimes vocal to mental prayer; to have been too much pleased with the taste of heavenly comfort, or too heavy and cast down under sufferings. I seemed to perceive in these answers something of pride and haughtiness, and that smelt strong of a pharisaical *Non sum sicut cæteri hominum*,—I am not like other men; and which made me fear that pride (having been the sin of the angels in heaven) might probably also be the sin of these solitaries here on the top of the mountain. And indeed, so far were all these dazzling shews of piety from making me conceive any inclination for these material solitudes, which seemed so much to facilitate the practice thereof, that on the contrary, it made me conceive a greater love for an ordinary and humble life in the world, accompanied with all those pious practices which in such a life we have continual opportunities to exert. It appeared to me, that these solitaries placed the whole and main of godliness in some trifling observances, which yet are powerful enough to make them wander from the paths of that charity they ought to have for those who are engaged in the commerce of the world, as looking upon them no otherwise than as men that are in the high way to utter perdition, and for whom there is almost no hope of salvation. Surely such

thoughts as these cannot be said to comply with charity; for without doubt some seculars living in the world, are as acceptable in the eyes of God as these hermits on the mountains.

The porters told us that three times a week they of the monastery below brought up viands, and other necessary provisions, for the sustenance of those who lived in the Sacred Desert.

At last they conducted us to the church, which is very little and narrow, all lined and wainscotted with wood, against the moisture and great coldness of the place. They assured us, that some certain winters, the cells, church and all, were wholly buried in the snow, and that they were fain to hollow themselves out passages below through the snow, making some holes to the top to let in the light, for to pass from one cell to another, which then appeared like so many great white vaults. They told us, that all the while they live under the snow, they are very little sensible of the cold; but to preserve themselves from the ill effects of the moisture, they keep good wood fires, that burn day and night, as having near them vast forests of pine, chesnut and fir trees, which do furnish them with wood in great abundance. After we had visited the church, we returned by the same way we came, and arrived at the abbey about five o'clock in the evening, where we were civilly entertained as before.

It is only this monastery that is still maintained in good observance; all other monks of the same order, who have any monasteries in Italy, lead a very scandalous life. We parted thence the next day, after that we had returned our thanks to these fathers, and knowing that the abbey of Valombrosa, which is the chief of another order of monks, very famous in Italy, was not above a day's journey from thence, we all of us travelled thither. We went down hill for some miles, and

afterwards coasted about the Apennine by a very pleasant way. All these sides of the mountains are exceeding rich, as abounding with all sorts of fruit trees, and at the bottom of every one of these trees, there is a stock of a vine that embraceth it, and interlacing its branches with those of the tree, does at the season make a very pleasant mixture of its grapes with the fruit. After half a day's journey, we were obliged to mount the Apennine, for four miles together, through very stony and rugged ways, until we came to Valombrosa, in Latin *Vallis Umbrosa*. This place is indeed a valley with respect to the tops of the mountains, that raise themselves a great height above it; but if we compare it with the level of the country that lies beneath, it is a very high mountain, and very cold; for there are no fruit trees to be seen here, except only some chesnut trees, and a few apple trees. The great forest of pine and fir trees that encompass it, in former times rendered the place very dark and shady, which was the occasion of giving it the name of Valombrosa. St. John Gualbert made choice of this place for his retirement. He naturally was a lover of these kinds of places, and in all his travels, whensoever he met with any dark wood, or very solitary place, he cast in his mind, some time or other to come and fix his abode there, and to be the founder of a monastery.

I am frequently obliged in my Letters, in compliance with the exigency of my matter, to relate to you several vicious and wicked actions of the Italian priests and monks; a thing very contrary to my natural inclination, which prompts me to conceal the ill, and to publish only the good; wherefore a little to refresh my wearied pen, and to comply with the desire I have to honour the memory of great men, you will give me leave, Sir, I hope, to give myself the satisfaction of relating

to you an action truly virtuous and memorable of St. John Gualbert. This young lord had a brother, whom he most tenderly loved, who being engaged in a duel, was unhappily killed by his rival. Gualbert supposed it would be an action worthy of his honour and great courage, to endeavour to avenge the death of his brother. To this purpose he engaged himself in pursuit of the homicide, who being fled, he went in quest of him throughout all the provinces of Italy. It happened at length that he met with him disarmed in a way where he could not escape him. The unhappy wretch seeing him come towards him with his drawn sword in his hand, cast himself prostrate on the ground, crying for mercy; but perceiving by his thundering voice, and his inflamed looks, that there was no quarter to be hoped for, laid his arms across his breast, in expectation of the mortal blow. Gualbert seeing him in this posture, called to mind our Lord Jesus Christ hanging on the cross, who was so far from avenging himself, that he not only prayed for his persecutors, but died for them. This thought having quite spoiled his former design, he alights from his horse, and instead of running his enemy through, he freely forgave him, kissed him and embraced him, and tendered him ever after as his own brother. If the Italians and other Papists, instead of amusing themselves about the superstitious worship of their saints, would once apply themselves to imitate these lovely examples of their virtues, they would without doubt render themselves more acceptable to God, neither would they be found so basely and abominably avenging themselves as they do.

I return now to my solitude of Valombrosa. We arrived at the famous abbey, where are some of the most magnificent and sumptuous buildings that can be. One of the Florentine gentlemen

that was with me, had a brother who was the chief person there, next to the abbot, for whose sake we were very civilly received. The monks here lead a very commodious and pleasant life; when they are weary of living in this desert, they make an interchange with the monks of Florence, and thereby enjoy the pleasing variety of living one part of the year in the country, and the other in the city. They have cut down, for a quarter of a league round their monastery, all the great fir trees that shadowed it, to give themselves more air, and to make the place more healthy. The next morning we were led to the hermitage of St. John Gualbert, which is about half a league distance, upon the point of a little rock, which lifts up itself in the midst of the valley, being very craggy on every side. In getting into it, we went round the rock, as by a winding stairs, for the space of one quarter of an hour, at the end of which, we found ourselves at the top of the rock, where the hermitage is; which consists of a very neat chapel, curiously gilt and painted all over, and a very handsome set of lodgings, well wainscotted and painted all within, with a garden of a moderate size, so that the whole is a mere jewel. There is no monument left here of the ancient cell of this saint, all the buildings being new and modern. There is always a father hermit that dwells here, with a converse brother to serve him. Whenever the hermit dies, the abbots of the congregation of Valombrosa, at their general chapter, make choice of a monk of exemplary life, and a lover of solitude, to reside there. The great abbey is to furnish him with all necessaries of life; he has a very fine library full of choice books, when he has a mind to study; and, indeed, the hermit that was then in possession of the place, was a man of competent learning, and appeared to me a very honest man. He

made us a very fine discourse about the contempt of the world, and the advantages of retirement and solitude; though, indeed, there was no great need of it, for we were already so charmed with the beauty of this hermitage, that in case there had been more of the same cut, nature, rather than grace, would easily have persuaded us to become hermits, in order to enjoy an easy and pleasant life, without either care or trouble. The monks of Valombrosa have extremely relaxed the strictness of their first institution. They are cloathed in black, and profess the rule of St. Bennet, though, indeed, they observe but little of it.

The next day we set out betimes in the morning towards Mount Alverne. This is the place where the seraphic father St. Francis, founder of all the religious orders that live under his rule, retired himself to spend his life in contemplation, and where (as the tell us) he received the impression of the sacred wounds. This day's journey was exceedingly troublesome to us. We went up from Valombrosa to the very top of the Apennine, and continued our way upon the same, till we came to the foot of Alverne. This mountain is discovered at a great distance, and some maintain it to be the highest of all the Apennines. It hath nothing that is pleasing or delightful about it, neither is any thing to be seen here besides bare rocks, without either trees or verdure. We got up to it with a great deal of trouble and difficulty, by a very narrow way between extreme high precipices, and we could not gain the top of it, till it was in a manner quite night. Here we found a large convent of religious, of the order of St. Francis, called by the Italians Soccolanti, because of the wooden socks they wear instead of shoes. The first thing we did was, to inquire where we might lodge for that night. The fathers told us,

there was an inn close by for the entertainment of strangers. Formerly these religious exercised hospitality towards all sorts of persons, that out of devotion came to Alverne; but at present they are weary of this piece of service, and do employ the fund destined to that purpose to their own advantage. By bad hap for us, there was no body in the inn, the inn-keeper with all his family being gone to a wedding, a day's journey from the place; so that we were obliged to return to the convent, and entreat the fathers to afford us some shelter amongst them for that night, since there was no other place for us to bestow ourselves. The fathers seeing no remedy granted our request, but with so much averseness and ill will, that we could not but wonder to see that persons, who for the most part live upon the alms that are abundantly contributed to them by seculars, should refuse to assist them upon occasion. They shewed us a chamber where we might lie, but as for affording us any thing to eat, they desired our excuse, telling us, that they had none for themselves; being thus resolved to leave us without either meat or fire, though the nights are exceeding cold there, upon the pretence of the trouble they had in getting their wood, as being obliged to fetch it from the foot of the mountain, we desired them at least to be so kind, to give us leave to enter their kitchen, to warm ourselves a little at their common fire; but they being very loath that we should see the good provisions they had there prepared for themselves, told us, that they could not grant our request, because they had some of their fathers that were sick about the fire, saying their office. One of the Florentine gentlemen that was in our company, knowing that the convent was never destitute of provisions, broke out into a passion against the guardian, and reproaching him with his base incivility, told

him, that he constantly three times a week sent a good quantity of bread and wine to their great convent at Florence; but that he was resolved to stop his hand for the time to come, and give them the bag; and that, moreover, he himself would acquaint them with the reason moving him so to do. This advertisement made the guardian presently change his note; and having excused himself for what was past, he conducted us into the kitchen, where, instead of these sick fathers and mumblers of their offices, we found four or five fat friars playing at dice, a great pot boiling over the fire, and several joints of meat roasting. One of the friars seeing us come in, very nimbly snatched up the dice and boxes into his gown; but in a while after forgetting himself, rose up, and let all tumble down on the ground. The father guardian perceiving the mischance that had happened, excused them the best he could, telling us, that having been a great way off that day preaching, to refresh themselves they had made bold with a little recreation. In fine, they made us sup with them, and we were very well treated. After supper they conducted us to our chamber, where we found a very good fire.

The next day one of these fathers accompanied us to shew us the holy places of Mount Alverne. We were extremely surprised to see the surface of this mountain, which we had not had the time the night before to take notice of, because it was very late when we arrived. The whole mountain is nothing else but a company of rocks heaped one upon another, and all cleft asunder, forming as many hideous precipices, which cannot be viewed without horror. Some believe that these rocks were rent asunder at the death of our Lord: St. Francis was of this mind, when he pitched upon this place for his retirement, to meditate upon the sacred mysteries of the passion. They shewed

us the place where the history of his life tells us, that Jesus Christ appeared to him in the form of a Seraphim on the cross, and imprinted in his hands, his feet, and his side, the five wounds which he had received; to the end it might be said, that St. Francis had suffered as much as he. But indeed, according to this account, he would have suffered much more; for the same legend adds, that he suffered even until his death, the pains of Jesus Christ as sensibly, as our Lord felt them, when he received them on the cross; and that from that time forward, the life he lived was continued by a perpetual miracle, which preserved me in the midst of a continual death. For my part, I find this pretended apparition of Jesus Christ like a Seraphim with wings, extremely improper, not to say ridiculous; why not rather in his human form? He that would not take upon him the nature of angels, shall we believe that he would ever take their figure? And would not this highly favour the opinion of those ancient heretics, who maintained, that the Son of God had only taken upon him an airy and phantastical body? And to speak my mind, I believe that this impression of the wounds, was only performed on the strong imagination of St. Francis, much like some others have imagined, that they had feet of wax, and a head of glass. The place where it is said that this miraculous operation was celebrated, is under a great stone, whereof the one end only is wedged into the rocks, yet so, according to my understanding, is sufficient for its support. Nevertheless these fathers every where proclaim this for a great miracle, and that it cannot be conceived but that naturally the stone must needs fall.

Near to this they shew us a little pathway, very narrow, upon the brink of a vast precipice, which was the way by which St. Francis went to pray

under the rock. The devil envying his great devotion, attempted upon a time to cast him down headlong; but he, seeing the enemy of mankind coming towards him, leaned himself against the rock, which made way for his body, softening like wax to receive him. They still shew this impression of his body left in the rock, but which may as well have been done with a chissel, as the way they tell us.

The fathers afterwards shewed us many other places in the rocks where St. Francis performed his religious exercises, and amongst others, that where he wrote the constitutions of his order, whereof I have seen the original, written with his own hand, at our Lady of Portiuncule's, which is a little chapel in Umbria, about five miles from Assise. Here it was, as they tell us, that he had many revelations and apparitions; amongst the rest, an apparition of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in consideration of his great zeal for the salvation of sinners, granted to him as plenary an indulgence as he could give; that is to say, an entire remission of guilt and punishment for all those who, on the first day of August, should visit this little chapel; so that the grand universal jubilee of the holy year is not more saving to sinners than this of St. Francis: for any person who on the above day visits the chapel, with intention to enjoy the advantage of this jubilee, by saying five Pater Nosters and as many Ave Marias, be he the most abominable sinner that lives on earth, becomes as pure and innocent as he was when newly baptized; and should he die in that condition, there is neither hell nor purgatory for him, but he would go directly to paradise. And conformable to this belief of the Roman Catholics, and more particularly of the Italians, there is such a prodigious concourse of people on this day from all parts, that many have been killed in the throng

that is at the door of the church, who then go to enjoy the privilege of their indulgence in the other world.

Now seeing all this, must not we avow, that either the Roman Catholics are very blind, or else very negligent of their salvation, who, in the most important affair imaginable, and the greatest concern of their immortal souls—the remission of their sins, rely on the word of a mortal man? Their St. Francis has told them, that by going to such a place on such a day, and there saying such and such prayers, their sins shall be entirely forgiven them; and that he has received the assurance of this from the mouth of Jesus Christ himself, who, he saith, appeared in particular to him for this purpose; and without examining the matter any further, they believe it—they rely upon his word, and cast behind their backs the sacred oracles of the Gospel, which do seriously warn them, that the only way to have their sins pardoned, is true repentance, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. The Fathers Soccolanti, of the order of St. Francis, who are extremely enriched by means of this devotion, have built themselves in this place a very fair convent; and forasmuch as the chapel was too small for their use, they have built a large and magnificent church round about it; so as the little church stands now enclosed in the greater. I never yet saw any place of devotion in Italy, which had not some fair palace, and a good kitchen for the use and accommodation of those who make the best of it, which I confess makes them still the more suspicious to me.

Five miles distant from hence we met with Assise, which is a pretty town, situate on a hill: this is the place where St. Francis was born, and where they say his body reposeth at the great convent of the Franciscans, in a subterranean

chapel, under the high altar. It is said that his body, and that of St. Dominick continue there without the least symptom of corruption, and that they stand both upright on their feet, hand in hand, without any thing to uphold them; and that it hath pleased God thus to permit, that these two saints, who had been so great friends during their lives, should not be separated after death. This is a mystery that is not suffered to be seen at present; the Pope himself, for all his pretended power in heaven and on earth, is not admitted to this privilege, since one of his predecessors miscarried in the attempt, who being resolved to take a view of this rare wonder, died suddenly: and soon after both these saints appeared to an honest Franciscan friar, and told him, that the like should happen to all those who should be so fool-hardy as to attempt the same thing. But yet, notwithstanding all this tradition, the Fathers Soccolanti, who constitute a distinct body from that of the Franciscans, assure us, that they have the body of St. Francis at Portiuncule, which, as I have already said, is not above five miles distance from thence; as well as the Dominicans maintain, that they have the body of their patriarch in their great convent of Bononia. Indeed, the reason why the Popes do not visit this place, is not because they are afraid of meeting death there, but because they are afraid of disobliging one of these potent parties; I mean the Franciscans or the Dominicans; since it is evident, they could not make the discovery without ruining one or other of these devotions, which would be a vast prejudice to the order to which it belonged; wherefore they like better to leave the people in superstition and error, than to open their eyes at their own cost. The Pope is obliged to cultivate and improve the interest of the monks, forasmuch as they support his interest.

The third thing wherewith I designed to entertain you before my closing this letter, concerning St. Francis, is, that amongst other things, I saw a small convent which he built himself, with the assistance of his brethren, in a descent of the Appenine, leading to a town of Italy, called the Borough of the Holy Sepulchre. He lived in this convent several years, and designed it for a model to those convents of his order, that should be built for time to come. To speak the truth, I never in my life saw so wretched a dwelling. The whole convent is nothing else but a company of holes or caves, more proper to lodge bears, than for men to retire in. Now I could wish, that men would a little compare this poor hovel, with those magnificent convents which his children, I mean those who profess to live under his rule, have built throughout all Italy; to wit, those grand convents of Rome, Naples, Venice, and in a word, of all the other cities. Have not the most famous architects exhausted their art, and racked their brains, to form the model of them? The most renowned painters employed their utmost skill and choicest colours to make all their walls a pleasing and lively story? The most curious gilders their finest gold, to make thereof celings bright and luminous? And lastly, have not the bowels of the Apennine been ravaged for the finest marbles, the choicest jaspers, and rarest porphyries, to form the pillars that support them, to pave their cloisters, their refectories, and their Dormitories; and to compose all the doors, windows, and chimneys of their cells? The Capuchin fathers are the only men who have witnessed some horror for so extravagant a pomp, so diametrically opposite to the laws of humility and poverty, which they received from their legislator St. Francis. They engaged themselves at the beginning of their reformation to a certain standard of building their

convents, which was both very modest and regular; only they have always had a great care to provide themselves fair gardens, with fine parterres, pleasant fountains, and great walks of trees, which are commonly frequented by the gentlemen of cities that are near them, to take the air in. The Capuchins are at this day the best gardeners in Europe.

But we find that latterly they have lost much of their modesty in building too. The new buildings they make are very lofty, more large, their cells greater, their churches more adorned, and their other regular places more comporting with the modern way of building. They have very fair convents at Venice, Florence, Pisa, and Milan. When I passed through the duchy of Burgundy, I saw at Dijon the fine pile of building these fathers caused to be raised for their sick, which was not in the least inferior to the palaces of the presidents and counsellors of parliament of that city. And when I passed through Germany, in my way for England, I saw upon the Rhine, about half a day's journey above Coblentz, a stately building, which I took for one of the palaces of the Elector of Treves, but was indeed a convent of Capuchins, which his Electoral Highness caused to be built for them. Before the foundations of it were laid, he demanded of them a model of their convents, to have it built by; but the fathers answered him, that if St. Francis were to give the plan, it would be very plain and scanty; but that forasmuch as his Electoral Highness had the goodness to concern himself therewith, it could not well be blamed, if the building did in some degree suit with his greatness.

The conclusion of all is this, Sir, that whatever these men may pretend to, as long as they shall make the Christian perfection to consist in certain phantastic, stoical, and extraordinary ways of

living ; a short time's experience will make it appear, they have deceived themselves ; all their fine designs will vanish in their own view. And as the principles on which they build are false, they will always find themselves reduced to the impossibily of practising what they have vowed ; and will be forced at last to acknowledge, that the great axioms of Christian morality, which are of an infallible truth, and to which only we ought to tie ourselves ; are to avoid evil, and to do good ; to love God with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves. I conclude with these excellent words, am with all my heart,

Sir,

Your's, &c.

LETTER IV.

Journey to Loretto.—Pleasant Pilgrimaging of Persons of Quality.—Marvellous Stories of La Santa Casa.—Miraculous Image of our Lady of Loretto; the same of immense wealth. Great Privileges granted by the Pope to the Holy Chapel of Loretto.—Italian Miracles, and the purposes for which they are got up.—Vowed Pictures.—The Mystics. St. Anthony of Padua.

HAVING promised in my last Letter to give you an account of my journey to Loretto, I doubt not but your curiosity (to be informed about that place of devotion, which makes so great a noise in the world) will incline you to wish for the performance of my promise. To the end therefore that I may acquit myself thereof, I shall begin where my last Letter left me. After the view I had taken of Mount Alverne, I parted with my company, who went no further, and all alone came down the other side of the Apennine; and taking my way through the towns of Fossombrône and Urbane, I came to Fane, which is a pretty city, situate on the Adriatic Sea. Whilst I was here, going abroad in the morning, to look out for some convenience to go to Loretto, I saw a great number of persons very comically mounted and dressed, coming into the town. They were pilgrims that came from Bononia, about three score in number, all mounted on asses, and accoutred in pilgrimage habits; these consist of a large linen vest, of an ash-grey colour, reaching to the middle of the leg, with very wide sleeves coming down to the wrist; on the backside of these vests, at the collar, they have a kind of large cowl, which they put over

their heads, and being pulled down reacheth to the pit of the stomach, so that their faces are wholly covered with them. And to the end that in this posture they might have their free sight and breathing, these cowls have openings in them, answering to the eyes and mouth, like masks. They never draw these cowls over their heads, but when they come to places where they have no mind to be known; for otherwise they let them hang backwards on their shoulders. They bind this vest about them with a girdle, and somewhat above the girdle upon the breast, they have a scutcheon representing the arms of their society, confraternity or company, which they call in Italian Scuola. There are scarcely any Italians that are not of one or other of these societies. The pilgrims, moreover, have a large row of paternoster beads hanging at their girdles, and a pilgrim's staff in their hands, which is the chief mark of their pilgrimage. These staves are about half a pike's length, with knots or protuberances at the top and middle of them. They carry them to the church, to get them blest by their curates, before their setting forth, which ceremony is performed with many prayers, and the assistance of holy water. As soon as they have received them it is not lawful for them to stay any longer than three days at the place of their residence, and cannot be admitted to the communion till they have performed their pilgrimage, except they be pleased to change the vow they have made into a pecuniary mulct; for in that case they are very readily discharged by the priests. The pilgrims which I saw, upon their arrival at Fane, were all of them drest in vests of the same colour, and had already run one stage on their asses. The vests were all new, and of very fine linen; and forasmuch as in all appearance, they were not moved to put on that garb from a penitent spirit, they had taken care to tuck them up high enough in several places, to

make their fine clothes of gold and silk, they had under them, to be seen; which made me also believe, that probably they must be persons of quality. Their girdles were of silk, of the same colour with their vests, and extremely wrought. Upon my enquiry, who they were? it was told me, they were the company or society of our Lady of Life of Bononia, which is the name of a very richly endowed hospital, for the relief of poor sick people, and where the priests have erected a congregation or society of noble persons, who have their daily masses and prayers there. Upon their entering into this society, they oblige themselves to assist the poor of that place, with their estates and best endeavours. The greatest part of the gentlemen of Bononia are of this society; they go every year by way of procession to Loretto, towards the end of autumn, when vintage is past; which is also observed by most other companies.

As soon as they were come near to the great church, the priests came out to meet them, with the cross and banner, by way of reception and bidding of them welcome, and made a short speech to them; to which the prior of the company, being a Bononian earl, returned an answer in few words. After this, they entered into the church, where they made some short prayers, and then dispersed themselves throughout the best inns of the city, whither orders had been sent over night, to provide a good dinner. It was about ten in the morning when these pilgrims arrived, and near half an hour after, they were followed by about twenty caleshes full of ladies. These were female pilgrims, who had left Bononia upon the same design; and who were all of them either kinswomen or mistresses of the aforesaid pilgrim gentlemen. They were all of them most sumptuously attired, and with an air of wantonness and gaiety that very ill became persons who went

on a pilgrimage out of devotion. They had little pilgrim's staves fastened to the bodies of their gowns; some of them were of gold, others of ivory, all beset with costly pearls and diamonds; some had them made up with orange flowers, or of those artificial flowers which are in so great esteem at Bononia, and which make so great a traffic with the nuns of that city. Others again had them all wrought of needle-work, to that height of curiostty that one of them might probably have been the work of many years; and lastly, others had them of other precious and costly matter. The pilgrims had no sooner taken possession of their inns, and given orders to have all things in readiness, but they went forth to meet their ladies; and having bid them welcome, conducted them, with a great deal of honour and ceremony, into the apartmeut prepared for them. My curiosity to observe these proceedings prompted me to return to my inn, where I had already taken notice of the great preparations that were making for them; and, finding that the gentlemen wanted a chamber more to accommodate them, I offered them mine, and in recoompence they very civilly entreated me to dine with them. The table was covered with many dishes, and all dinner-time their discourse was nothing but a continual raillery upon their ladies' pilgrim-staves. It was not any hitting or pinching raillery, but such as consisted only of appropriate allusions full of wit, and certain ambiguous words, which these Italians knew to be to the taste of their ladies. As soon as the dinner was done, every one of them put themselves in order to prosecute their journey. The pilgrims mounted on their asses, and the ladies into their caleshes. As for my part, I joined a very honest man, a native of Parma, who did not go on pilgrimage, but travelled out of curiosity. We followed this troop of pilgrims at a small distance,

being mounted in the same manner as they, though we could not join ourselves in company with them because we had no pilgrim's habits. I asked of the Italian why those gentlemen, who were all persons of quality, and who probably had their coach and horses at Bononia, did make use of these asses on their journey? He told me that some made use of them out of a frolick, and to make themseves mirth on the road; others, by way of humility, and to obtain more merit; and moreover, that these asses, by carrying so many devout persons to Loretto, had by that means obtained a very particular kind of blessing; which was, that never any mischance happened to those that rode on them; for if by chance any did fall from them, they always escaped very happily, without receiving any hurt. By this discourse I began to perceive that this honest gentleman believed these asses also to be miraculous. He told me, that some Algerine pirates having lately made a descent in the Marquisate of Ancona, could not, with all their endeavours overtake a company of travellers that were mounted on these holy asses, though they pursued them very close, and that having fired very thick at them, they neither killed nor wounded any one of the company.

As we rode on thus discoursing together, we now and then cast an eye towards our pilgrims that were before, and found they made it their only business on the road, to divert the ladies that rode in the caleshes: some of them crossing the way before them, strove to put themselves into comical and ridiculous postures, to make them laugh; others fell from their asses on purpose; and in a word, as the Italians have a very pleasant and ready wit, their behaviour all along the road was nothing but mirth and comedies. The ladies without doubt, were not wanting to bestow a thousand blessings on the day and mo-

ment, wherein they were so happy as to make a vow to go to Loretto, forasmuch as probably they had never in all their lives been better diverted.

Every body knows the humour of the Italians, that no sooner have they married a wife, but they make her a slave. However, their jealousy hath never yet been able to hinder them from going to the church on Sundays and holidays, or to the places of pilgrimage, when they have made a vow to that purpose. The Church of Rome has declared it a mortal sin not to go to mass on those days, or not to accomplish the pilgrimage one has vowed; and hath deprived husbands of the power to hinder their wives from performing these necessary duties. If any husband should venture to oppose his wife in these particulars, the Inquisition would take notice of it, and proceed against him, as a person who does not approve of going to mass or pilgrimages, and consequently is an heretick. The ladies, you may be assured, are not wanting to make good use of this their privilege; or to have recourse, whenever they think fit, to this last plank of their shipwrecked liberty; *ultima naufragæ libertatis tabula.* Scarcely ever shall you see a lady going to these kind of devotions but she has some very devout lover following her; and one might judge with half an eye, from the air of these he and she pilgrims I am now speaking of, what was the principal motive that swayed them to undertake the journey. About four o'clock in the afternoon they stopped at a village to refresh themselves; which done, the gentlemen rode on to the next town, to compliment the church there before the ladies' coming, as they had done in the morning at Fane; after which, they retired with these ladies to the best inns of the town, where they were not wanting to make good cheer and divert themselves; and in the aforesaid manner continued the rest of their

journey till they came to Loretto. I'll be judged by you, Sir, whether this be not a very devout way of going on a pilgrimage, sufficient to confound and abash the Protestants, who reject them, and content themselves to call upon their Father that is in heaven, without putting themselves to the trouble of going to seek him either at Rome or Loretto.

We met with, besides these pilgrims already mentioned, whom we followed very close, several other bands of them, consisting of merchants and tradesmen, some of them going to Loretto, and others returning thence, all of them making sport with their pilgrim-staves and extravagant habits, upon the road, and in all the inns they came to treating themselves with the best that could be had. I have since understood that all tradesmen in Italy do each of them keep a saving-box, into which they put what money they can spare during the whole year, in order to their going in pilgrimage, either to Loretto, St. Anthony of Padua, or to some other place at a further or nearer distance, according as they guess that the money they have gathered will hold out, to defray their charges going and coming, and every where making much of themselves; and, to speak the truth, there is nothing more agreeable in Italy than these kind of journeys in the beginning of spring, or towards the end of autumn, after the great heat is past; especially when one is in good company, where there is never wanting some or other that has the gift of making others laugh. The Italian females especially make use of a thousand intrigues and inventions to induce their parents or husbands to let them go on a pilgrimage. There is no vow they will make more readily. Above all things they make great use of the authority of their confessors, to acquaint them that it is the will of God that they should go thither, according

to their vow. In the mean time the whole journey is spent in fooleries, as I have now hinted; and the merry adventures they meet with in them furnish them all the winter, at the fire-side, with pleasant stories to divert the company.

Thus I have given you some account of the Italian pilgrims, according to my promise, which joined to those that frequent the hospitals, whose description you have seen in my last letter, comprehends the whole set of pilgrims, from the richest to the poorest. It is to no purpose here for the Roman Catholics to tell us that these are only particular instances, which cannot be of any force against the foundation of their doctrine; for this holiness of pilgrimages in general, is no more to be met with than a universal *à parte rei*. A man indeed may imagine himself a universal human nature, yet he will never be able to find human nature but in particulars, or individuals. Besides, if pilgrimages were endowed with efficacy to make men holy, without doubt we should find many pilgrims so qualified; and the acknowledged truth of the old proverb would be overthrown, which says:—that never did a good horse, or wicked man, become better by going to Rome. If St. Jerome, St. Paula, and many others, went to visit the holy places of Palestine, yet it was not this that sanctified them, or made them saints; and, without doubt, they might have done as well by having staid at home. I say not this as if I meant to blame them for so doing, no more than I would reprove an honest man, who out of curiosity, (yet so as not to neglect his business, and without injuring any one,) should take a journey to Constantinople, or to Rome. It is even natural for men to have some respect and veneration for great travellers; and I cannot but own that I think it a laudable curiosity to go to Jerusalem, and see all the holy places where Jesus Chrtst has wrought

our redemption; but with reference to our eternal salvation, I look upon it as a very unprofitable thing, and I shall never believe that any one is the greater saint for having been there. Jesus Christ has not fixed our salvation to any particular places of the world, more than to others; and will never suffer that those novel additions which men have been so bold as to join to the gospel, to accomplish their corrupt ends, should serve as efficacious means for their sanctification. I have conversed with a vast number of persons that have gone on a pilgrimage, but never could discern the least amendment in their lives; but, on the contrary, I have seen many who seemed to me to be much worse than they were before. They counselled me in Italy to do as a certain Genoese did, who was wont frequently to ask his butcher when he would go to Loretto? The butcher, wondering at this his oft-repeated question, demanded of him one day what might be the reason why he so often addressed in this manner:—because, (said the Genoese) I have a long time observed that upon your return from your pilgrimage, you never give me my full weight; and for this reason I am resolved, at your next return, to have no dealings with you for five or six months. And indeed he had reason to make use of this caution; for commonly in these journeys they spend at a most extravagant rate, and afterwards, to reimburse themselves, they make no scruple to make use of thievish and indirect means. Moreover, as I have already intimated in my third letter, there are very few that undertake these kinds of journies from a true spirit of devotion, but either out of curiosity or for their own recreation, or other such reasons.

But, as I do not pretend to judge of the inward intention of any one by any thing that is outward, I will at present be so favourable as to suppose,

that all these pilgrims go to their several places with the highest sentiments of devotion; but yet for all this, I say, they are not excusable before God, notwithstanding their good intention, though we may pity them for being so foully mistaken, as to give the worship, which is due to God alone, to a creature. *O quam bonâ voluntate miseri sunt!* This is all the favour we can do them; for we can by no means justify those adorations they render to the blessed Virgin and saints; yea, to the houses where they have lived, and the instruments of their martyrdom. But as this point relates to divinity, and my design is not to write to you as a divine, but only as a traveller, I shall leave it at present, and continue my discourse about my journey to Loretto. I arrived there towards the end of October. This town is situate in the midst of a very fertile and pleasant plain, two or three miles from the Adriatic sea. In former times there were no buildings here beside the chapel; but in process of time they built many houses about it, and the Popes, to whom the country belongs, have ordered a wall, with bastions, to be built round it; so that at present it is a considerable fortress to secure the ecclesiastical state on that side, and more particularly against the landing of Turks and other corsairs, who formerly did use very frequently to come and ravage that part of the country. This chapel is by the Italians called La Santa Casa, that is to say, The Holy House. The Roman Catholics believe this to be the very same house wherein Jesus Christ dwelt at Nazareth with the blessed Virgin his mother, and his reputed father, St. Joseph, for the space of thirty years, until the time that he began to preach his holy doctrine, and to confirm it by his divine virtue and miracles. They pretend that it was transported by angels from Nazareth, where it stood at first, to the place where it is at present. The

history they give us of it runs thus:—The Saracens, having made themselves masters of Palestine and the holy places, the blessed Virgin, unwilling to leave so great a treasure (as was the house wherein she had dwelt with her Son Jesus Christ upon earth,) in the hands of infidels, commanded the angels to transport it into the Christian territories. The angels, in obedience to her command, took it up foundation and all, and carried it by night into Dalmatia; but afterwards, taking notice of their mistake, and perceiving that the people there were nothing nigh so good as the Italians, they took it up again, and in another night carried it near to the city of Recaniti in Italy, placing it in a field that belonged to two brothers; where it continued many years, until the brothers began to quarrel about dividing the alms that were given there; whereupon the Virgin, to punish them, commands the angels to take it up a third time, and to carry it to the field of a poor widow woman, named Loretto, who was a very devout worshipper of her. This good woman, rising in the morning, and finding a little house where there was not the least sign of any the night before, was as much surprised as the brothers were to see it fled from their field. In this surprise she writes to the Pope concerning what had happened, who was already, by revelation, made acquainted with the whole matter, and immediately bestowed vast indulgences upon all those who should go to pay their bounden duty to the Holy House. The succeeding Popes have confirmed all this, and have granted an infinite number of other pardons. This place, in process of time, by great luck for them, is become an inexhaustible fountain of riches, and still to this day brings them in prodigious sums of money every year.—What think you, is not this a very

pleasant story, and is not the bare relation sufficient to render it contemptible?

The good angels that carried this holy house the first time into Dalmatia, surely were very stupid, and did not mind what they did. Moreover, if the blessed Virgin was pleased to take it away from the two brothers of Recaniti, because they were at variance about it, I wonder how she has the patience to leave it at present amongst a company of rascals and robbers, that have nested themselves there, and who, for the most part of them, are all sellers of Pater-noster beads and medals; for all that ever were at Loretto know, and are warned before they enter the town, that in case they desire to perform their devotions there without having their purses picked, they must hold their beads in one hand and their purse in the other.

I proceed now to the description of this chapel, or the Santa Casa. The whole building is of brick, about twenty-five feet long, the length not being proportioned to the breadth of it. The wood with which it was ceiled being consumed and rotten with age, it has since been vaulted with brick. It hath two windows, and two doors on the two sides of it, and another window beneath, by which, they say, the angel Gabriel entered to annunciate to the blessed Virgin the mystery of the incarnation. They have erected an altar in the very place where they say the Virgin was upon her knees when the angel entered; and upon the altar is an image of the Virgin, of wood, about four foot and a half high, which is the miraculous statue on which they bestow their adorations. She has changes of clothes for all the working-days, and for all holydays and Sundays; she has them of all sorts of colours, and mourning clothes for the passion week. They shift or change her clothes with abundance of cere-

monies. I was there one Saturday in the evening when the priests undressed her; they took away from her the suit of purple she had on, in order to dress her in a green gown, which they performed in the following manner:—They first of all took off her veil, then her great robe, or mantle royal; afterwards her gown, and her upper and under petticoats; and last of all, with a great deal of reverence, they pull off her smock, to put her on a clean one. I leave you, Sir, to guess what thoughts this may probably impress on the imagination, as well of those who perform the ceremony, as of those who are the assistants and spectators. True it is that the statue is not made naked; the workman it seems that wrought it, having been more modest than so, and represented her as clothed: but this action of clothing and unclothing the figure of a woman, is a thing that offends the minds of those that are never so little chaste or modest. I acknowledge, indeed, that they perform this ceremony with a great deal of outward respect, if it may not more properly be called idolatry; for they kiss every part of the apparel they take off from her, bending their knees to the ground before the statue, and adoring it. The people who are present upon their knees, all the time the ceremony is performing, beat their breasts; and nothing is heard throughout the chapel but sighings and groans, with interrupted words and ejaculations—Holy Virgin of Loretto help me! Mother of God hear me! and other such like. As soon as the image is quite naked or undrest, these sighs and groans are doubled, but decrease again by degrees, as they dress it. I cannot imagine what should be the cause of this change of their tone, except it should be this, that when the statue is quite undrest, it more strongly affects their imagination, and makes them believe they see the very Virgin in person;

and that this therefore is the nick of time to pray with the greatest fervour of devotion. They dressed her in a green suit of apparel, extremely rich, being a flower work upon a ground of gold. The veil they put upon her head was yet more costly; for besides that it was of the same cloth of gold, it was all powdered with great fine pearls. After this they put upon her head a crown of gold, thick beset with precious stones of an inestimable price. Next they put on her neck-jewel, her pendants and her bracelets of diamonds, and many great chains of gold about her neck, to which were fastened abundance of hearts and medals of gold, which are the presents that queens and Catholic princesses have bestowed on the image out of devotion, in testimony that they were resolved to be its slaves. The whole adorning and furniture of the altar was equally sumptuous and magnificent, nothing being to be seen but great pots or vessels, basins, lamps, and candlesticks, all of gold and silver, and beset with precious stones; all of which, by the light of a vast quantity of wax candles that burn there day and night, afforded a lustre whose beauty ravished the soul through the eyes.

It is indeed no wonder to me that many do aver themselves to be sensible of an extraordinary devotion in this place. For besides that one cannot enter there without thinking of God, because the imagination already anticipates that it is the chamber where the Eternal Word became incarnate, it is certain that it is the property of all bright and luminous objects to raise our hearts to the Creator, much more than dark or common ones do, and especially when their splendour is seconded with novelty. When we lift up our eyes to the firmament in a clear night when the sky is full of stars, the sight powerfully raises our souls to God, and makes us say, *Quam agusta est*

Domus Dei!—How glorious is the house of God!

In like manner, those persons who are not wont to see so many lights, so much gold, silver, and precious stones, which mutually exalt each other's glory, as soon as they enter this chapel of Loretto, where they meet with all these things together, cannot but naturally be moved with thoughts of devotion. This natural effect being by some simple and ignorant people supposed to be a particular grace of God appropriated to that place, makes them take it for no less than a continued miracle. But the extravagancies continually committed here are a sufficient argument against this weak and ungrounded opinion. They kiss the walls all round about the chapel, they lick the bricks with their tongues, they rub their beads against them, they take thread, and having compassed the chapel with it, as if they pretended to take the measure or compass of it, they afterwards make a girdle of it, which they say is very efficacious against witchcraft, and all manner of ills. The priests in the mean time, are not unmindful of their gain; they have persons placed every where in the chapel and great church, who press the people to give alms, and to have masses said for them to our Lady. They pay a crown apiece for every mass, and the priests promise to say them all at our Lady's altar, that is in the chapel. It is certain that the priests receive money for the saying of above 50,000 masses every year; and yet it is as sure that it is impossible for them to say above 10,000 in a year at that altar; so that all the rest who have given their money for that purpose, must needs be frustrated of their intentions, and choused of their money. Those that are rich and wealty bestow great presents upon the wooden statue of the virgin that is in the chapel, which without any addition or modification, they call

the Holy Virgin of Loretto. They present her with necklaces, and bracelets of pearls and diamonds, hearts of gold, medals, candlesticks, lamps embossed, pictures of gold and silver of a prodigious weight, and size. Many present her with rings, and most precious jewels, as a token of their espousing her, insomuch that she is at this day the richest puppet that is in the universe, and the piece of wood the most sumptuously drest that is to be found in the whole world.

It is to this image that those famous litanies which are so much in vogue with the Church of Rome have been addressed, which are commonly called the Litanies of the Virgin, or the Litanies of our Lady of Loretto; wherein she is termed the Queen of Angels, Mother of Divine Grace, the Gate of Heaven, the Help of Christians, the Refuge of Sinners, &c. However, neither all these costly ornaments, or glorious titles, have been powerful enough to divert the worms from exerting their industry upon this so highly adorned and adored statue; for I observed, as they were changing its clothes, that the wood was rotten, and full of wormholes. Thus we see that this piece of wood, which is supposed to hear the prayers of so many idolaters, carries its own condemnation with it, in that it is not able to rescue itself from corruption.

The Popes who draw more gold and silver from this place, than from any other in the world, have accordingly favoured it with the greatest stock of indulgences. They have granted to this chapel all the privileges appertaining to their St. Peter's of Rome. The grand penitentiaries and confessors, who are all Jesuits, do here absolve all sorts of cases, even of those the Popes have reserved for themselves. For seeing it is a place in the Popes' own territories, it is very indifferent to them whether they be absolved there or at Rome,

because their profit is the same: but I question not, should the angels think fit once more to take the pains to transport this chapel into the estate of some strange prince, they would soon revoke and cancel all their pardons, forasmuch as then the case would be altered. They are now very careful to preserve the chapel whole and entire; and to this end they have darted all the thunderbolts of the Vatican against those who shall venture to loosen the least stone of it, or so much as to scrape the walls; it is lawful to lick them, but not to bite off the least particle from them. The reason of this is, because, according to the principles of Rome, a part is taken for the whole:—thus if they have but a finger, or any other small part of a saint's body, it is the same thing as if they had it all entire: whence it follows, that if any one could get but a little piece of brick of the *Santa Casa*, he might go and build a chapel in a strange country, and having enclosed therein the bit of brick, make the place as considerable as this of Loretto, and by this means spare many people the labour of going so far in pilgrimage. Hence you may conceive how great a damage this would be to the Popes, and how much it is their interest to affix, as they do, in all places within and without the chapel, and the great church which compasseth it about, the anathemas and excommunications they have pronounced against those who should be so unadvised as to take away the least particle thereof. However, being mistrustful of the efficacy of their thunderbolts in this case, and not believing them sufficient to secure this their vast treasure, they have had recourse to subtlety and cunning, and have falsely published, that God hath punished many persons with sudden death, who had been so bold as to take away some of the bricks thereof; that others have been deprived of motion, until they

had vowed to restore what they had so sacrilegiously stolen, and lastly, that angels had come and snatched the bricks out of the hands of those who had stolen them, in order to fix them where they were before.

Amongst the rest they shew us two bricks, which are fastened to one of the walls of the chapel with two pieces of iron, to distinguish them from the rest; one of which a Polish gentleman had carried away, with the design of having a like chapel to that of Loretto built in his own country. They tell us, that by an invisible force he was stopped in his journey, and deprived of all motion, and by this means was forced to send back the brick he had stolen to Loretto, which he had no sooner done, than his immobility being taken away, he was in a condition to continue his journey. The other was taken by a Spanish lord, with the same intent, who being on his journey homeward, the angels pursued him, and after having banged him handsomely, took away the brick from him and carried it to Loretto.

These miracles, and many others of the same stamp, (that is to say, equally ridiculous,) are printed and affixed in several places of the church, that strangers may read them and beware. For my part, Sir, I can assure you that all these are no better than great staring lies, forged and invented by the Popes, for the purpose of persuading the people that they have the *Santa Casa* whole and entire, and that there is not the least scrap of it in any other part of the habitable world. That which makes me assert this with so much confidence is, that I myself did loosen a considerable piece of the wall of Loretto, and carried it away with me, without being banged by angels, or made immoveable by some invisible power: and if the guardians of the chapel have not taken care to stop up the hole again, I am sure that it may be there seen still to this day.

They begin to say their masses every day at the Virgin's altar, by two o'clock in the morning; I repaired thither about three, and finding but very few persons in the chapel, I kept in the entry, where I could not be taken notice of by any, the people being all before me, and none on either side of me or behind me; at which time, with an iron instrument I had, I broke off a piece of the wall and carried it away with me; since which, I have travelled throughout all Italy, I have been in France and in Germany, neither hath any the least ill accident befallen me; until at last, being weary of carrying this stone so long in my pocket, and looking upon it as an unprofitable burthen, I cast it away in the fields by way of contempt, and out of a kind of indignation, in that it had received such adorations as are due to God alone. I must own, that about two days journey from Loretto, near Tolentin, in my way to Rome, there happened to fall a very great rain for two days together, whereby the brooks swelled to that degree, that they drowned a great part of the country; and passing over an old bridge, one of the arches, shaken with the tread of my horse, fell down with an horrid noise into the water at two steps from me, upon which, swiftly turning my horse, I got over the other half of the bridge behind me as fast as I could, and at the same moment, the brick I had taken at Loretto came to my mind; I deliberated with myself, whether I ought to go back and return it to the place again; but taking reason rather than the present accident to be my counsellor, I made these following reflections:—

First, I considered, that if indeed God were so jealous of preserving that chapel whole and entire in every part of it, he would never have suffered the ceiling, which was a considerable part thereof, to rot and fall down; to repair which defect, (as

I hinted before) they have arched it over. In the second place, I considered with myself, that the manger at Bethlehem, and the holy sepulchre, were not inferior in dignity to this little house of Nazareth, and that nevertheless God had been pleased to leave them in the hands of infidels; and that consequently the story told concerning the transportation of the Santa Casa, and the motives of it, could be no better than a fable. And lastly, as I myself had been an eye witness of so many cheats and lies, which the Romish priests invent to increase their gains, this served for a convincing argument to me, not to give the least credit to all these pretended miracles, which are only invented either to preserve the chapel of Loretto, in the Pope's territories; or at least to dispose the minds of the people, that in case upon occasion of war, any strange prince should cause the same to be carried to his own country, they might, notwithstanding, believe that the angels had brought it back again to its former place; and consequently might boldly deny, that this supposed prince had the true Santa Casa.

All this made me conclude, there was nothing extraordinary in the fall of this bridge, as happening either by reason of the age and weakness of it, or because the violent torrent of the waters had undermined its foundation. Being thus satisfied, I went to seek another place for to pass the water, and so continued my voyage, thanks be to God, very happily. Had I gone back to restore the stone, the priests, to be sure, would not have been wanting to cry out, a miracle, a miracle! and to publish the same every where; a picture would presently have been drawn of this accident, which they would have added to the great number of that kind, which are fastened to the walls of the church, and the piece of brick would have been distinguished with a piece of

iron, to be taken notice of by pilgrims and strangers, as an evidence of the said miracle; whereas, experience and time have since fully convinced me, that God never concerned himself in the case, and that the fall of the bridge was merely casual.

Before I take my leave of Loretto, I will tell you in general, that the treasure preserved there is altogether inestimable. A Pope, being informed that some had acquainted the Turks thereof, and that they were projecting a descent there, caused the town to be fortified with strong walls and bastions, where he planted abundance of great guns; he apprehended, it seems, that the angels would not be so zealous to preserve the treasure that is there kept, as they had been to secure the bricks of the Santa Casa. And to speak the truth, the case is very different; for it is an easy matter to restore the bricks, where any are wanting, and then declare that the angels have returned them to their places; but should the Turks come once to take away the precious stones of that inestimable treasury, it is to be feared they would be to seek for a miracle, to restore them.

The Jesuits, who are very vigilant of getting into possession of the best and most advantageous posts, have obtained all the confessors' places of this church, and at certain hours of the day they repair thither to hear confessions in all sorts of languages. They have a very peculiar and wonderful dexterity in extorting money from strangers; they beg of all those that come to confess to them, on pretence of assisting poor pilgrims therewith; but indeed keep all they get for themselves, except only some few pence they give them now and then, making use to this purpose of their mental restriction, as a Jesuit (who had quitted their society) told me: for seeing they have made a vow of personal poverty, that

is, of never possessing any thing in particular, but all in common, they pretend themselves to be the first and chiefest poor, and pilgims too, forasmuch as every man is a pilgrim upon earth. Thus they bestow the alms given them upon themselves, and believe that by this means they abundantly answer the intention of those who have entrusted them with the distribution of them. A poor priest of Savoy, who was reduced to a very pitiful condition, coming to me to beg an alms, I sent him to a Jesuit, who I knew had that morning received threescore crowns of a rich man. The Jesuit told him he was very sorry he was not in a condition to assist him, for that of a long time he had not been entrusted with any charities; and so sent him away without giving him any thing.

Which way soever a man turns himself in this holy city of Loretto, he meets with persons who beg money of him. The priests ask it to say masses for you; the Jesuits, to give alms to the poor; an infinite number of box-carriers, who gather in money for the use of the chapel, are continually dunning you, as well in the streets as the church, to put something into them. The shopkeepers of the town, who are all of them sellers of bead-rows and medals, deafen your ears on every side to come and buy their trumpery. A vast number of vagabonds, in the habit of pilgrims, flock about you to beg the *passada*, and to cut your purse if they can. And lastly, the vintners and inn-keepers sell their provisions at a most exorbitant price, alledging for their excuse, that the Pope lays such vast imposts upon every thing that enters Loretto, that it is impossible any otherwise to save themselves harmless; insomuch as all being well weighed, the Pope proves to be the greatest exactor of all.—And is not this now, think you, a place sufficiently qualified with holiness, to make it the darling city of the blessed

Virgin? And are not these well-chosen people, for whom God should work so many miracles to keep them in possession of this house, which the Romanists pretend to be the very same wherein the Eternal Word became incarnate?—All the walls of the great church are full hung with a vast number of little pictures, in which are represented the miracles which the holy Virgin hath wrought in favour of those who go thither in pilgrimage.

I shall take occasion here to acquaint you in what manner miracles are wrought every day in Italy, and what they are. I have observed three chief causes of them; the first is the covetousness of the clergy; the second is the cunning of some beggars; and the third is popular error, joined with a custom the priests have introduced of sending pictures to the churches, representiug the dangers that any have escaped.

As for the first of these, which is the avarice of the priests and religious, which are the two orders that divide the whole clergy, there can be no better invention to satisfy the same (next to purgatory), than this of publishing, from time to time, some miracles which they pretend to have been wrought in their churches. I say, next to purgatory,) which indeed is to them an overflowing source of riches, because the thing is more general. All men must die, and all the elect (according to their doctrine), must at least pass through the flames of purgatory for some hours or some days; neither was there ever any (say they) except the blessed Virgin, who by a peculiar privilege has been exempted from it. This is the reason why there is not a Roman Catholic to be found who doth not give money for masses, and prayers to be said for his deceased friends and kindred; or who does not make legacies or foundations, for to have the same said for himself after his death. But as for miracles, these only happen in particular cases. Nevertheless, as the

life of man is subject to many sad accidents or disasters, men would be very glad to be sure of a miracle to relieve them in time of trouble or danger. This it is which makes those of the Romish communion, to whom their priests promise no less at every moment, upon condition they will signalize their devotion at the chapel of such a miraculous saint, which they pretend to have in their church, or join themselves to some of their confraternities, suffer themselves easily to be persuaded to give them what money they ask of them. In the mean time they find it necessary, from time to time, to awaken and excite the people's attention by the starting of some new miracle, which they know how to do with a great deal of address and cunning. The most common way they make use of is this, when they go to visit the sick, they carry along with them either wine or water, or some rag of linen, which they have blessed in the name of such a saint. If the sick person who has made use of any of these, chance to recover, which very naturally may happen, because we have instances every day of persons that recover, after they have been given over by physicians, then the priests are sure to attribute the recovery of their health to the saint of their church. They demand an attestation of it from the person who was sick, they make a great noise with it through the city, and the next Sunday they publicly proclaim the miracle from the pulpit. In like manner, if any person be ready to undertake a journey or voyage, they go to him and persuade him to make a vow to some saint of their church; and if afterwards it happen that this person meet with some bad accident, as a dangerous storm at sea, a fall from his horse, or the overturning of his coach, and that he escapes with his life and health, as it often happens to the worst of men, in this case he never fails in ascribing it to the saint of his church; immediately upon his re-

turn he acquaints the priests or monks therewith, who begin a-new to spread it about, crying, a miracle, a miracle! and that nothing can be of greater force against storms and tempests at sea, or mischances by land, than to apply one's self to the saint of their church, and to procure prayers and masses to be said for them there, as the person who is lately returned from his voyage, and to whom this miracle has happened, did upon his setting out.

Others, indeed, who are endowed with a larger conscience, and who believe it is lawful for them to lie, to enhance the honour of their saints, have the boldness to suppose and invent miracles, and to produce themselves for examples, declaring that they have had revelations, or that the saints themselves have appeared to them, or have healed them of their infirmities. The people, who suffer themselves to be gulled by the outward appearances of godliness of those sorts of men, do not trouble themselves to search any further into the matter, but rely upon their word. There are some men who from natural intimations know two or three days before what sort of weather it will be. Thus there are some, who by the pains they feel in their corns, will tell you whether we shall have fair or foul weather. A certain father of the order of the Servits at Vicenza, a man of a wicked and debauched life, never failed of feeling excessive pains two or three days before rain. Now there happened an extraordinary drought for three months together, which caused extreme damage to all the fruits of the earth; but at last the season being about to change, the father was not wanting to have the sad advertisement of it. He was the sacristan, (or, as we corruptly speak it sexton,) of a church called Madonna del Monte, or my Lady of the Hill, which is about half a league distant

from the city of Vicenza, situate upon a pleasant hill, where is kept a miraculous image of the Virgin. And as he perceived that the devotion of people was already much abated, which he was very sensible of by the slackness of his purse, he thought of kindling it again. For this purpose, making use of the present conjuncture, he sent to the Podesta, or Governor of the city of Vicenza, acquainting him, that being at prayer in the night time before the image of the Virgin, whose sacristan he had the honour to be, she had told him, with an intelligible voice and a pleasant smile, that she had a great deal of compassion on the afflictions of her people, by reason of the great drought which spoiled all the country, and that in case the inhabitants of Vicenza would within three days make a general procession to his church, she would open the flood-gates of heaven, so that there should be rain in abundance. The governor hereupon immediately caused an order to be published for a procession against the time the good friar had signified; at which time the weather did not fail to change and favour his wishes, for scarcely was the procession advanced half way, but there fell so furious a shower that all those who assisted at it were almost overthrown, and had much ado to get to the church, where they sung hymns of thanks to the Virgin for that high favour.

This miracle, being rumoured abroad throughout the country, for two months together, drew a great number of people to this miraculous image. The devout sacristan, finding his purse well lined, repaired the next carnival to Venice, to amuse himself there, and to make his mistresses partakers of his good fortune, and frankly acquainted them with the success he had, and how cleverly he had gulled the unthinking people. But some time after, one of them falling out with him, like ano-

ther Delilah betrayed him, and discovered his imposture. Had it been in any other country he would hardly have escaped without bearing the marks of it; but in Italy these things are easily excusable, with saying, that nothing was intended in all this but the advancement of the blessed Virgin's honour.

Another fetch of the priests is something of my own discovery, and which I do not know that any one before me has taken notice of, and it is this:—They are used to entertain children with an infinite number of false tales and stories, invented at random, concerning apparitions and miracles that never were. To explain this further to you, you may take notice that in Italy the children are catechized every Sunday and holiday throughout the year in all their churches, at one o'clock in the afternoon. To make them the more ready and willing to come to be catechized, the priests, after they have explained some one point of doctrine, they tell them, for a conclusion, some pleasant story before they send them home. The little Italians listen to it with the greatest attention imaginable, and as soon as they are come home, tell it to their mothers. I have observed that these priests do commonly take for the subject of their story some miracle or other, which they pretend to have been wrought in their church.

I entered once into a chapel where one of these catechizers was informing his young scholars. The chapel was dedicated to St. Martin, who is ordinarily painted on horseback, and with his sword cutting off the half of his cloak, to give it in alms to a poor beggar. It was in this posture his statue, which was of a very pure white marble, represented him on the altar of that chapel. When the catechizing was over, the priest began to tell the children a very pleasant story con-

cerning this statue. He told them "that a good curate of that parish had often seen him very fairly come down from the altar, and running a full gallop out of the church; that one day taking the liberty to ask him whither he was going, St. Martin told him that he was hastening to the assistance of a very honest man, who had procured many masses to be said at his altar, and being at present fallen into the hands of robbers, in the midst of a wood, was in great danger of his life: but that he hoped to come time enough for his relief, and that at his return he would give him an account of the success of his enterprize." The catechizer flourished his discourse with circumstances so extravagant and ridiculous, that it was impossible to forbear laughing; for he gave a particular description of St. Martin's whole journey upon his horse of marble; how he rid a full gallop over trees, rivers, cities and all. The poor children all this while listened to him with profound silence and attention But the conclusion of all, and the cream of the jest was,—that every one that bore a great devotion to that chapel, and procured masses to be said there in honour of St. Martin, might assure themselves never to perish on the high ways, by the hands of robbers. The next day I had occasion to speak to my young clergyman, and put him in mind of his marble St. Martin, whom he made to ride post for a diversion to his scholars. He answered me, smiling;—"What would you have one do, Sir? It is the custom of this country to entertain the children that come to be catechized with such stories as these; because without this we should have none of their company. It is impossible to tell them always true ones; and therefore we are sometimes fain to be beholding to our inventions for them. Things are only so far evil as they produce ill effects; but these sorts of stories cannot

but in time bring forth very good fruits, as that of inspiring them with great confidence in the saints, and obliging them to pray, and cause masses to be said in honour of them." What think you? Is not this an excellent piece of sound morality? And are not these children, think you, well taught? They are called to the school of truth, yet they teach them nothing but lies. In the mean time there is nothing capable of making a greater impression on our spirits, or of fixing a thing more lastingly in our memory, than what we learn in our first and tender youth All these foolish discourses do not fail of producing very great effects, and of passing at last for current truths in the minds of the Papists, who besides this, are accustomed very glibly to swallow a great number of absurdities and contradictions in the point of transubstantiation, which they so stiffly maintain; and this is it, probably, that has so overrun Italy with fables, and impertinent and ridiculous stories. Yet these people are so infatuated therewith, that in case any honest man and lover of truth, should seem too curiously to enquire after these matters, or in the least to disapprove of them, he would pass for no better than a heretic. Thus a certain person was cast into the Inquisition for saying, that he did not believe what was told of the ass of St. Anthony of Padua, that kneeled down to worship the host, to confound the Protestants.

From this first cause of miracles, which is the covetousness of the clergy, I proceed to the second. which is the slight and cunning of certain beggars.

Poverty is a well-spring of great blessings to those who do bear it patiently, taking it as from the hand of God, and making good use of it; but withal, it is no less a gulph of misery and unhappiness, to those who receive it with a contrary

spirit; and I do not believe there is any wickedness comparable to that of a wicked beggar. A wicked beggar hath no conscience; he is disposed to undertake any thing in order to rid himself from the wretched circumstances of his destitute condition. There are many of this sort in Italy, who live by their wits and invention. There are some that have the patience to counterfeit themselves cripples, blind, or struck with the palsy for five or six years together, to make the world at last believe, that a miracle has been wrought upon them, attributing their recovery to some image of the virgin, or to some saint. The profit which accrues to them by this is, that the people, being informed of the miracle that hath been wrought for them, presently believe them to be very good men, and great friends of God, as having received such signal favours from him; this makes them to bestow liberal alms upon them, to have a share in their prayers. Yea, it often happens, that some rich and devout persons take care of, and make such provision for them, that they never want all the remainder of their lives. The priests and monks, also, afford them an allowance, when at any time by this means they bring any of their chapels in vogue and request, so as they receive considerable profit thereby. I have been shewn many of these beggars in convents and monasteries, who live there amongst the domestics in great ease, and without doing any thing.

The third spring from whence miracles issue in Italy, is a popular error, which has crept in amongst them, and at present has taken such deep root, that it is in a manner impossible to pluck it up. It is this: upon the least accident that happens to the Italians, and the least sickness or indisposition that seizeth upon them, they make a vow to some statue or image of the virgin, or some saint, to be delivered from it. Now, it

is evident, that all mishaps do not prove fatal to life, neither do all diseases terminate in death, so that many times they escape and are restored to health again; when by a strange superstition, instead of attributing the glory thereof to God alone, who is the sole Lord of life and death, they attribute the recovery of their health, or their deliverance from danger, to the statues or images to which they have made their vows. To make their acknowledgment of the favour they have received the more authentic, in compliance with the ill custom introduced amongst them, they cause a picture to be drawn, wherein is set forth what happened to them, and themselves, in the act of imploring the aid of the said statue or image, which to that purpose is represented in one of the corners of the picture, and towards which they stretch forth their arms or folded hands with these three letters underneath, P. G. R. which signifiy in the Italian, *Pro Gratia Ricevuta;* for a favour or grace received.

These vowed pictures we generally find in all the churches of Italy; neither is there any of them without some miraculous image, which receives the honour of all those deliverances and favours, and to whose glory those shipwreck-tables are hung up. There is no need of tapestry or hangings in these sort of chapels, for the small pictures are so thick hung that they cover all the walls. There are all sorts of them; some of them represent persons pursued by murderers; others, that have been wounded; and others, beaten at sea by furious tempests; yea, there are not wanting some that are very scandalous. These pictures, which are no more than simple vows, have acquired so great credit in the minds of the people, that they pass at present for real miracles: and the priests and monks, who write the histories of the places of devotion, which belong to

hem, make no difficulty to alledge them as such. So that now in Italy, they count the miracles by these pictures; and the more of these any statue or image hath about it, the more miraculous it is.

I will take this occasion to tell you of a picture, which some young monks of the abbey of St. Victor in Milan, caused to be made whilst I was there. The occasion of it was this: they were gilding the roof of one of the lower aisles of the church, when the monks out of curiosity, while the workmen were gone to dinner, ascended the scaffold, to the number of seven or eight of them, to view their work, where one of them less heedful than the rest, treading upon a board that was not well fastened, fell down upon the floor of the church. All the rest being affrighted at this accident, and supposing that the whole scaffold was coming down, betook themselves to ladders, and let themselves slide down by them, without receiving any hurt, except only the poor monk, who fell down with the loose board, and was much bruised. They took him up in this pitiful condition, and he was obliged to keep his bed two or three months before he was fully recovered.

I was present when the accident happened, and could see nothing in all this but what was very natural. He who fell, hurt himself proportionably to the height from whence he came down, and the rest received no hurt at all, because they slid down by the ladders;—in all this there appears nothing of a miracle;—however, because the scaffold was erected before the chapel of St. Bernard of Sienna, the monks concluded that without doubt the saint had helped them. Accordingly they got a picture drawn, representing their fall, in one corner whereof the saint was painted, stretching forth his hands for their safety. and published every where throughout the city, that he had upheld them in their fall from receiv-

ing any harm. The cardinal-archbishop was immediately acquainted therewith; and every one congratulated them for being so much in favour with the saint.

From this example, and what before I have told you upon this head of miracles, you may easily conceive, how far we are to give credit to those fine legends of the lives of the new saints of the Romish Church; and of what weight that great list of miracles ought to be with us, which are the chief stuffing and garniture of them. There is not one of them that has not restored sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb, and a clever use of their limbs to cripples; and, in a word, they have preserved from all ill accidents, and cured all manner of diseases. But when one comes to an enquiry into particulars, all this vanisheth in smoke, and the whole of the matter is reduced to some pictures, which superstitious people, who without reason have imagined themselves to have received great favours from these saints, have caused to be made. However, when these legends are sent to strange countries which are of the Romish communion, they make a great noise, and are all looked upon as miracles, sufficiently confirmed by authentic proof and evidence. It is a common reproach cast upon Protestants, that no miracles are done amongst them; and they will needs have this to be an invincible argument, to prove that they are in error. A Jesuit in a Latin oration, pronounced in the cathedral of Strasburgh, soon after that the French had taken possession of it, exclaimed in these words, *Quid dubitamus de falsitate Religionis eorum, apud quos cessavit Propheta et Sacerdos, et Miracula periêre?* What do we doubt any longer of the falseness of their religion, with whom both priest and prophet are ceased, and miracles are lost? The Protestants might very well have answered him with

truth, that there can be no reason of doubting, but that a religion so fraught with superstition and counterfeit miracles, as the Papist's religion is, must needs be false. The profession of a good Christian is, to live according to the Gospel; but not to confirm it by miracles; this is the work of God alone, and, therefore, we ought not to reproach one another upon that score. We see every day, that jugglers (though we know they deceive us, and though we eye them with all the attention imaginable, to discover their artifice,) are notwithstanding so dexterous at their tricks, that they gull us before our face;—and shall we blindly believe all that the Italian monks and priests tell us, who have the gift of cheat and invention? For my part, considering the times in which we live, I will never believe any miracle, as long as my reason tells me the thing was feasible by men.

It is commonly held, that the body of St. Nicholas of Bar, in the Pouille, is miraculous; and that from his tomb there continually distils a salutary oil, very proper to restore the sick to health. But it is enough for me to disbelieve this miracle, because I know that men may easily convey the oil thither, and ingeniously make it to distil down. I have sometimes seen poor persons, returned from that pilgrimage, who had little bottles full of this oil, which had cost them money enough, who would afterwards fain have given it for a piece of bread, but could find no customers to take it off their hands. Which makes it evident, that the Italians, for all their bigotry, had no belief in it themselves. In like manner at Naples, the priests make shew of a bottle, which they affirm to be full of the blood of St. Januarius, archbishop of that city. When at first they bring forth this blood to be seen, it appears all congealed; but as they approach it to the body of the saint, it

dissolves by degrees. As to this also, it is sufficient ground for me not to believe it, because I know that this liquor may be congealed, in the manner that they make *sorbets*, and afterwards dissolve by the heat of the place where they shew it, or by the heat of the hands of those who hold it.

At Padua they shew us the tomb of St. Anthony, which sends forth a very sweet scent, between that of ambergris and musk. The friars of the convent tell us, that this odour proceeds from the bones of the saint; but the testimony of these fellows, who are so biassed by their interest, does not give me any satisfaction, as long as I know that they can easily anoint it with odorous quintessences, as it is certain they do; because that this odour is the very same with that of the perfumed Paternosters, that are sold in the shops at Padua. In the same place they shew us, in a very fair crystal, supported by a stately pedestal of gold, extremely well wrought, the tongue of the said saint, which, they say, was found in his tomb, being endued with the privilege of incorruption, all the rest of his flesh being consumed.—They have the impudence to aver, that this tongue, for having been a lash to the Sacramentarians of his time, has been preserved thus sound and whole, without the least taint of corruption, that as a perpetual miracle, it might bear witness to the truth of the doctrine of transubstantiation. The greater part of the Romish legends tell us, it is as fresh and lively as when the saint was alive; but that is false, for I have seen it, and it is dry. Those who have the art of embalming bodies, may preserve a tongue in this manner for many years, yea, many ages, without any thing extraordinary, or so much as bordering upon a miracle.

Thus I have given you a view, Sir, of the most famous and avowed miracles of Italy, which the

Roman Catholics pretend to be so palpable and sensible, that they cannot be denied without giving the lie to sense and reason. I will add to these, three bodies of saints, which have been preserved without any taint of corruption, and which I have seen all three. The one is the body of St. Rose of Viterbo; the other St. Clara of Monfaucon; and the third of St. Catherine of Bononia. These bodies have been preserved whole and uncorrupted; but without any the least beauty, being altogether dried up, as hard as pasteboard, and very black; they are very frightful to behold, notwithstanding they have dressed them in very rich habits, and adorned them with more jewels than queens are embellished with on their coronation days. Some have a great esteem for these incorruptible bodies, and so should I too, in case they enjoyed their former lively tincture and natural colour; but to be so dry, so black, and so ghastly, it were much more eligible, in my mind, to return to the universal way of all flesh, than to be made partakers of such a kind of incorruption; neither can I see that God herein hath conferred any great favour upon these blessed saints, by preserving them in a condition proper to terrify nature, and affright mankind. The works of God are all perfect, he never bestows a favour by halves; and if he were pleased to grant incorruption to bodies, he would also probably preserve them with all the natural qualities belonging to them. Wherefore I do not believe that the defective incorruptions of the bodies of these saints can truly be ascribed to any thing else but the dexterity of those who have dried or embalmed them.

We saw at the Chartreuse of Venice the body of a noble Venetian, which being embalmed, has been preserved whole and entire for above an hundred years. This person was never accounted a saint, and yet I found his body much fairer

to the eye than were those of the three saints now mentioned, though it be much more disregarded and neglected than they are; for they have left the body in an old wooden coffin, which does not shut close, and where all those that go to the Chartreuse do view it and touch it; whereas, the bodies of these saints are kept in very dry chapels, where the great wax tapers, that burn by day and night, purify the air, and clear it of all moistures and impurity. I have also seen in France, at Vandosme, in the collegiate church of the castle, the body of Jane d'Albret, who died a very zealous Protestant, above an hundred years since; her body hath been very well embalmed; and if at present one would take it up from the place where it lies, and dress it, and keep it in a very dry place, it would undoubtedly appear much fairer than those of these religious; and yet I am very well assured that the Roman Catholics will never say she was a saint.

And as I am now upon the chapter of these saints, I shall acquaint you that I have often read the history of their lives, and of many others in the legends of the Church of Rome; but never in all my life did I meet with any thing more ridiculous; and I have observed that these are the prophetesses of which the Jesuit spoke at Strasburgh, and which the Protestants are deprived of, *apud quos cessavit propheta*—who have no prophets among them. In a manner all their religious, (after they are arrived to the state of perfection, as they call it,) take upon them to prophecy. For the better understanding of this, you may take notice that at Rome they have distinguished or divided the spiritual life into several states; as an house hath so many stories, the lowermost, the middle, and the highest or uppermost. There is one state they call active; this is the lowest, and consists only in action, and an orderly regulation of the senses,

according to the law of God. The second is the contemplative state, which consists in the meditation of those things which have no communication with the senses. The third is a state extatical, abstracted, and purely passive, in which the soul does nothing but by a simple application, adhesion, and union with the divine essence, receives (without any action, affection, or contemplation on her part) impressions from God. There are but few that arrive to this uppermost story; but when any are once got thither, whatever they utter, or action they do, it is no more they themselves who act or speak, but God that speaks and acts in them; for as for them they never depart from this their intimate union with God. Whatsoever they say or speak in this state, is very carefully heeded, as being all divine. If they speak of things past, they are revelations; if of things to come, they are prophecies. It is by this door that so many new notions are entered into the church of Rome, which they believe as firmly as the gospel, though they have no other foundation than the overheated brains of these saints. Many of these have themselves penned their own revelations, as St. Bridget, St. Melchilda, St. Catherine of Sienna, St. Gertrude, and many others. By means of these saints the church of Rome hath attained the knowledge of all the particularities of our Saviour's passion, how many strokes he received at his whipping, how often he fell to the ground under the heavy burden of his cross, how many thorns pierced his sacred head, and how many times they spat in his holy face. By the same way they have discovered whatsoever happened at the manger in Bethlehem, how the blessed Virgin took the veil from her head and made clouts of it for her little Jesus; what she said and did before she was delivered of him, and a vast number of other particulars which

are not to be met with in the gospel. By this means they were informed of the great mystery of the assumption of the blessed Virgin, when she ascended up to heaven in soul and body; the discourse she had with the apostles; how she by degrees mounted up into the air, bestowing her blessings all the way she went. In a word, almost all the new doctrine of Popery is derived from this overflowing spring, which is not yet dried up, nor ever will, as long as there are any of these prophets left in their church.

To give more weight to these new imaginations, these saints assure us that Jesus Christ appeared to them very often, and was become so familiar to them, that he talked with them as a bridegroom does to his bride; and that they took occasion, in these familiarities, to ask him whatsoever they desired to know. Jesus Christ himself taught St. Catherine of Sienna to read. He came and blew the fire for her, he swept her chamber, as may be seen in the history of her life, by which means she had an opportunity of discoursing with him often. Others of them received visits from Jesus Christ, who came and visited them, accompanied by his mother and his apostles; where they had great conferences together, and these saintesses that heard them discovered many secrets and mysteries in their discourse which they afterwards communicated to the Popes and the church; and this is that which at this day, in a great measure, makes the difference that is between the doctrine of the Papists and that of the Protestants,—*apud quos cessavit propheta*, who have no prophets to boast of. There is not a convent of nuns in Italy that has not some prophetess, who is always some old mother that hath been twice or thrice superior of the convent, and who not being in a condition of doing any thing else, applies herself to the unitive life.

I return now to my saints, whose bodies remain uncorrupted. They were all three of them arrived at the unitive state, and have all of them left prophecies behind them. St. Rose of Viterbo, did for a long time importune the Dominican nuns of that city to receive her amongst them, and to give her the habit of their order; but the nuns knowing that she was extremely poor, and that she could not, as the rest did, bring money to the convent, refused her company, and would not so much as receive her into the number of their convent sisters. The saint understanding this their rejecting of her, told them, that though they would have none of her now, yet they would be very glad to have her when she was dead. This prophecy proved true; for Rose being deceased with the odour of sanctity, and many miracles, after the Italian manner, being wrought at her tomb, these same nuns desired her body, which was granted to them; and the great number of masses which are procured to be said to her, together with the abundance of alms that travellers and pilgrims leave there, makes them consider it as their greatest treasure. This prophecy of St. Rose was very easy to be made; she knew that she was already far enough advanced in the good opinion of the people, to make them esteem her a saint after her death. She knew, moreover, that the bodies of such are always very gainful; that the nuns of that convent, as well as others in Italy, were very covetous; and that, by virtue of a vow she had made to St. Dominicus, they would not fail to demand her relics, as of right belonging to them; and so was in a condition to prophecy on a sure ground.

The saint whose body is to be seen at Monte Faucon, is accompanied with something that is very remarkable; they shew you all the instruments of the passion of our Saviour, which, they

say, were found in her heart after her decease; they are all of dried flesh, like as her heart is; they are very confused, neither are all of them sufficiently distinguishable or discernable. They shew you, likewise, three little round pellets of flesh, which, they say, were likewise taken out of her heart. One of these pellets being laid in a pair of scales, weighs as much as all the three together, and all the three weigh no more than one alone. This makes them say, that God was willing to imprint in the heart of this saint, a resemblance of the most holy Trinity; for in like manner, as these three pellets, though different in number, yet make but one weight, and that the weight of one alone, is no less than that of all the three together; so likewise, though there be three persons in the holy Trinity, yet there is but one essence; and one of these persons is no less in divine perfections, than the other two. I have seen these three pellets, but so far are they from suffering one to try the experiment, that they will not suffer you to touch it with your finger, to feel whether it be flesh or no. Every one knows, that a strong imagination is capable of producing strange effects in the body. It may be that this saint did so strongly imagine the instruments of the passion, as to leave them engraved in her heart; but it seems to me, that this is a violence done to nature, which can no way be pleasing to God, who is the author of it.

As for St. Catherine, she more particularly rendered herself famous by her abstracted life. The history of her life tells us, that she was in a continual union with God. I doubt not, indeed, but that there may be even to this day perfect souls amongst them that are ravished even into the third heaven; but these are extraordinary graces, which do not depend on any natural endeavour we can exert to obtain them. But, when

I consider that the Roman Catholics have made a fixed state of this union, that they prescribe rules to attain it, and it is sufficient, according to them, to put themselves into the hands of one of these mystical or unitive doctors, and follow their directions, in order to arrive at this state. When I consider this, I say, I cannot but condemn their error. It is a piece of impiety to make the divine operations dependent on the humours of men—to give rules for the obtaining of that by way of *merit*, which is the mere gift of *grace*—and to make one's self the dispenser and disposer of the gifts of heaven, as these doctors do.

Moreover, the ill consequences that follow from hence are very pernicious to souls. First of all, this assurance only, received from these mystical masters, of once being advanced to the unitive life, whilst so many others are left behind in the contemplative and active lives, which are so far below it, is very proper to inspire the parties concerned with pride and vain glory. Secondly, this may prove a very great discouragement to those who are necessarily engaged in an active life, to consider there are such perfect states beyond them to which they cannot attain, because the doctors do not think them fit to be admitted thereto.—Thirdly, this opens a door to manifold superstitions and errors; for they who are engaged in the active life, never take the pains to examine what the contemplative say; nor these, what the unitive or mystical do alledge for truth: so that the two first do both of them rely upon the last, who for the most part are persons of weak brains, and most extravagant thoughts, who believe that whatsoever they speak or act is from God. It is evident that the opinion of transubstantiation is only an effect of their whimseys, by the impropriety, abuse, and confusion of the terms they make use of to explain themselves. For in like manner as

they call their mystical life sometimes union, unity, identity, confusion, or mingling of the soul with God; sometimes the loss of the soul in God; the pure sight of God; peaceable possession of God; and many more, which may be found in the books that treat of the mystical life, whereof some are very false and impious, and others do only belong to a future life. Now in like manner, say I, as they make use of these terms to signify a simple adherence, compliance, and acquiescence of our souls in the good pleasure of God, which cannot produce identification; so of old times they called the holy supper, the real union of Jesus Christ with our souls; and the bread we partake therein, the truth, reality, and substance of Jesus Christ, which notwithstanding is only there in a figure: and afterwards, when this error had taken deep root, it brought forth this big word of *transubstantiation*, which at this day makes the chief difference between Papists who maintain it tooth and nail, and the Protestants who oppose it. Neither is it any great matter of wonder, that an error of such consequence is crept into the Church of Rome, without making any great noise; for, in the first place, there was nothing in it contradictory to the Pope's authority: and again, it was not lawful for the people to examiue what the mystical tribe asserted; insomuch that even to this day in Italy, if you chance in discourse with an unitive or contemplative person to contradict them in any thing, they tell you very freely, that these are matters too high for your capacity, and that you are to believe them in the things they assert, as being better acquainted than you with the ways of God, and as having already spent a considerable time in tracing the mystical paths of a spiritual life.

I have scarce ever seen any of these mystical persons but were very proud. They look upon

themselves as eagles, who take their flight into the highest part of the air,—and upon other men, as beasts creeping upon the earth. A common and humble life, full of affability, benignity, and sweetness towards one's neighbour, shall always be more desirable to me than all these great sublimations of spirit, which are apt to inspire men with so much pride. And if ever it shall please God to raise me to the high degree of contemplation or union, it shall be his work, and not the effect of any rule or direction which men can afford me. In Italy they make a kind of trade of it, and if a man doth not put himself into the hands of some of these mystical doctors, who pretend to be old travellers, and thoroughly well acquainted with the way to heaven, and who profess the art of guiding souls thither, he can never hope of arriving there. These professors are ordinarily old Jesuits, Capuchins, or missionaries, who being no more able to scout it up and down in strange countries, apply themselves in their convents to play the seraphic fathers, to the end they may be followed by a company of votaries, whom they discourse to morning and evening in their churches. These are commonly widows or old maids, and are called *Beati*, or blessed ones, good sisters, devout women, and sometimes, by way of derision, bigots. The father directors are very zealous of their advancement in the mystical life, and never leave them, till they have so wholly divested them of all love for the good things and riches of this world, that to be delivered from the burthen of them, they settle them on their convent—then it is they are arrived at perfection. They call them sisters, and tell them that having made a gift of their goods to their monasteries, it is the same thing as if they had professed amongst them. They bestow upon them pieces of their habits, which they call *little scapularies*,

and constantly wear about their persons; by virtue of which bits of cloth they are made partakers of all the good works of the order, and of all the graces, privileges, blessings, and indulgences granted to it; when they are dead they bury them in their churches; and they endeavour, if they can, to make them pass for saints, for an encouragement to others. And indeed, it is very easy for them to do it—they have but this course to take: the first sick person they go to visit, they amply discourse about the high state of perfection to which Madam such a one was arrived, who was lately buried in their church; that they do not doubt in the least but she is a great saint, and that if the sick person can but resolve to pray to and call upon her with full assurance, they question not but she will work a miracle in favour of him—yea, they many times offer to bless some wine, syrup, or other liquor, in the name of this saint, or to dip in it something or other that in her lifetime she used to wear, as her discipline or paternoster: and having done this, they offer the liquor to the sick party to drink, who if they chance to recover, the saint hath wrought a miracle; they cause a picture to be drawn of what has happened, which they carry to the saint's tomb. But if it happen that the patient die, or that the sickness continues very long, there is not a word made of it, but all is hushed in hopes of a better opportunity for the future.

Those who are any thing acquainted with the state of affairs in Italy, know that in all this I advance nothing but what is very true. Hence it is easy to conceive by what means so many new saints are entered into the Church of Rome, to whom at present altars are erected, It is to no purpose to alledge here the great precautions they take at Rome, in examining matters of fact in the verbal processes they make of their canonization,

so that it is impossible for any thing to escape the cognizance of those who have the charge of it — Alas ! it is but too well known, how great a power silver and gold have at Rome ; and it is certain they never canonize any saint, but it brings them in a great sum of money.

My design at first. was only to give you some account of the Italian pilgrimages ; but the occasion of mentioning these three saints, whose bodies are preserved in incorruption, have put me upon this digression. Wherefore, to make an end in few words of what I have yet to say of my first subject, you may take notice that all other pilgrimages of Italy, besides those of Loretto, Rome, and St. Anthony of Padua, are very inconsiderable. Some pilgrims go to St. Michael, which is at Mount Gargan, in the Pouille; others to St. Nicholas of Barre ; but the most that go to these places are beggars, because the way thither is very troublesome from the city of Naples, lying over high mountains, and the inhabitants of that country are almost all robbers. The Italian lords are very backward to lead their ladies a walk thither, with their pilgrim staves all set with diamonds: the delicious march of Ancona, or the pilgrimage of St. Anthony of Padua, in the pleasant Venetian country, is much more proper and secure for this sort of pilgrims. There be very few Italians who do not take this latter journey every three years, and some of them go regularly every year ; for this saint has gained so great credit in Italy, that he is of equal esteem with the Virgin, yea, with God himself: some with a great deal of reason have called him the god of Italy, *Italiæ Deus*.— When an Italian has sworn by St. Antonio, it is the greatest oath that he can make use of. And whereas in other countries they are wont to say, " I intend to go to such or such a place, at such a time, if God preserve my life ;" or, " I will do

this or that, if it please God ;" it is their custom to say, " I will go thither, or do this, if it please the Virgin and St. Anthony." Their most common interjection, whenever they are in any danger , surprise, or admiration, is to cry, *Madonna Santissima !* or, *St. Antonio !* And by a strange kind of blasphemy, though they make it a great point of devotion, they have the impiety to say, " I hope in St. Anthony I shall never perish."—They call him *the Saint*, by way of emphasis, *Il Santo*, which is a great honour, but of right due to God only, to whom the angels cry continually, holy ! holy ! holy ! There is never a church in Italy where there is not an altar dedicated to St. Anthony of Padua : they make their addresses in particular to this saint for all things that are lost, to which purpose they tell you the following story.

A rich Venetian merchant being at sea, by mischance let a diamond of very great price fall into it, who immediately upon his return to Venice went to Padua, and betook himself *al Santo :* he desired the friars to say nine masses for him, and to join their prayers with his for the recovery of the diamond. The ninth day, after his nine masses were ended, the merchant designing to treat all the monks of the convent with a dinner, he bought amongst other things a very large fish, and sent it to them ; the friar-cook having opened and gutted this fish, found the diamond in the entrails of it, which the merchant had dropped into the sea ; it was immediately restored to him, and thanks returned to the saint who had heard their prayers !

This story is related at large in the legend of his life.—But does it not seem to you, Sir, to be contrived or invented by these monks, to persuade men to send them in good dinners, and to get them to say masses for them ?

Sir, Yours, &c.

LETTER V.

Festivals and Confraternities.—Feasts of Gallantry at Rome.—Magnificent celebration of the Pontifical in Convents and Monasteries.—Advantages derived by the Priests and Monks from these Ceremonies.—Confraternity of the Little Scapular; of the Rosary of the blessed Virgin, and of the Cord of St. Francis.—The doctrine of Purgatory a great source of profit to the Church.—Curious Anecdotes.—Privileged Altars

I MET with nothing considerable in my journey from Loretto to Rome, save the accident which happened to me in passing a bridge, whereof I gave you an account in my last Letter. I arrived there about Christmas, and continued in that city all the holidays, and the lent following, until Easter. My principal employment during my stay here was to frequent their festivals, to hear their sermons, and to be present at their confraternities; which accordingly I do intend shall be the subject of this present Letter.

This word feast, or festival, in the Church of Rome, properly signifies those days of the year which are more religiously observed than the rest, in honor either of the Virgin, or of some mystery of the Gospel, or some saint, which we in England call holidays. Some of these feasts, are universal, others only particular. The universal feasts are those that are generally observed in all countries that profess the Romish religion; and on these days all are bound (under pain of mortal sin) to go to mass. The particular feasts are such as are only kept in certain provinces, cities, parishes, or chapels. Thus, forasmuch as at Rome there is a prodigious number of churches

and chapels, it is every day holiday in divers parts of that city.

But they have another sort of feast in Italy, which for distinction sake I may call feasts of gallantry. These are when some noble or wealthy persons, do at their own costs and charges undertake to have the first and second vespers, together with the mass, sung in music, in honor of some saint: I give them the name of gallant feasts; not so much for the music's sake, (that is to say, for the admirable symphony of voices and concerts of instruments, which are so great a part of them;) but with respect to the ladies who are invited to them, or who do commonly frequent them.

After I had for some days rested myself at Rome, I went abroad to take a view of the curiosities and antiquities of that great city. As I was walking one evening on the Piazza Navonna, I passed by a very fine church, called De la Pace: the porch, which of itself was a most exquisite piece of architecture, of the fairest white marble, was over and above magnificently embellished and adorned with most curious pictures, and a multitude of figures made of small sheets of silk of different colours, of the Bononia fashion. This gave me the curiosity of entering into the church, where I saw a very fine company of gentlemen, who had caused a kind of a throne to be made for them in a part of the church, from whence they could very commodiously view those who either came in or went out. It was one of these gentlemen, as I understood afterwards, at whose appointment and charges this feast was celebrated in honor of St. Agnes; though it was not the day of the year which is consecrated to her, viz. the 21st of January; but there was another mystery in the case, which we shall presently discover.

'These young lords had each of them in their turns appointed the celebration of their mistresses' festivals: they were eight of them in all, whereof the four first had already kept theirs in other churches, and this was the feast appointed by the fifth of them. He was of the family of Carpegna, and his mistress's name was Agnes Victerini. The church *de la Pace*, that is of peace, is extremely well adorned; it is gilt and painted all within in like manner, as almost all the churches of Rome are; however, the more to exalt its beauty, and to add something peculiar with relation to the feast now to be solemnized there, there were several triumphal arches erected in the middle of the church, which afforded a lively representation of the history of St. Agnes, who, by her constancy triumphed over all the torments which tyrants could inflict upon her.

This whole history was represented to the life, with little scrolls of silk. These are of different sizes, and of all sorts of colours. They know the set price they are to pay for an hundred ells thereof ready wrought, and every one chuseth what pleaseth them best. There are a sort of men at Rome, and throughout all Italy, who are called Addobbatori, or Adorners of Churches; these furnish the silks themselves, and are extremely ingenious and artificial to fold and form them in all manner of shapes and figures. They had been three weeks preparing these ornaments I am speaking of. There were two theatres erected on each side of the quire, which were embellished all over with histories represented in the aforesaid silken figures; the one being designed for the vocal music, the other for the instrumental, each consisting of fifty musicians. Besides these, there were in a little box near the altar, four musicians, called Sing-alones, who were said to be four of the best musicians that were in Rome; who

were to sing by themselves, the one after the other. They never go any where to sing but they are paid forty crows for each motet.

The Italians, more than any other nation of the world, love concerts of music, and those amongst them that have good ears, follow these excellent musicians to all places, so that there was a vast concourse to this church. When I entered, the music was not yet begun, and I took my place near to the throne, where these gentlemen were seated. They seemed to be somewhat restless to have vespers, or evening song begin, for it was already six o'clock, and all the wax candles had been lighted above a quarter of an hour, and the musicians were all at their posts. Some boys that had counted the wax tapers, said, there were four hundred and forty of them, of an extraordinary white wax. However, the gentlemen all impatient as they were, durst not order the beginning of the ceremony, because the fair Agnes, for whose dear sake all these preparations were made, was not yet come; and, forasmuch as they were willing not to be understood, they made use of the little French they had learned, to talk to one another. The principal, (who was at the cost of this festival, somewhat to quiet the mind of his companions) told them, he was assured his Agnes would quickly be there; that he had sent one of his lackeys, to come and give him notice, as soon as he should see her set forth from home; that she precisely knew the hour, and having promised to be there, she would certainly be as good as her word. Some of them answered him, that they feared lest her mother, who was very difficult and humoursome, might keep her at home, and advised him to send another lackey to acquaint her mother, that if she would not suffer her daughter to come, she should repent it. But just as they were in consultation

about this point, in comes the first lackey, and tells his master that the long looked for Agnes was coming, and already near the church. Whereupon, immediately a signal was given to the musicians to be in readiness, and the very moment she set her foot in the church, upon another signal given them, they thundered away the first anthem of the common evening song for the feast of virgins, beginning thus, *Hæc est Virgo sapiens et una de numero prudentium.*—This is a wise virgin and one of the number of the prudent ones. Whereupon our gentlemen in a trice changed their restlessness into an excess of joy and satisfaction, which might easily be read in their faces. I heard them say, that ladies often took pleasure in making their lovers wait for them, to make their presence, after a long attendance, the more acceptable and welcome. I should never have known this fair idol, amongst those throngs of ladies, that entered every moment, if the young gentleman, who had prepared all this incense for her, had not gone to meet her, and led her to her place. She seemed to me very modestly drest, having her head covered with a large black scarf, which almost reached down to her feet; her face was wholly covered, according to the custom of the Romish ladies, whenever they go abroad. Her mother followed her, the custom of the country being for the daughters to go before, and the mothers after. Near to the throne, where these gentlemen were seated, there was prepared for her a reading desk, covered with a very fair carpet of blue velvet, set round with a deep golden fringe, and great cushions of the same richly embroidered, whereon she and her mother kneeled down. I was very near her, and observed that as long as the music lasted, she did her utmost endeavour, under pretext of sticking some pins about her head, to discover some part of her face,

in favour of those gentlemen, who had their eyes almost continually fixed upon her; she made a shift to send them some smiles, and to make signs to them with her eyes, In the mean time, the music was incomparable and ravishing, and all the anthems that were sung, though for the most part they were taken out of the Canticles, were more applicable to this young lady, than to St. Agnes, whose feast they pretended to celebrate. Whilst I was here, I chanced to cast my eye upon a picture of this saint, which was placed upon the altar, at which the masses were to be said the next morning, and I easily perceived it to be the very face of Agnes Victorini, except only, that it was surrounded with rays, as the saints are used to be, and that they had painted a little lamb by her, as is customary in all the representations of St. Agnes. I saw by this, that the young gentleman had forgot nothing that might manifest his devotion to his young lady, having taken care to place her upon the very altar, there to be adored by every one. About the middle of the evening song, two of these gentlemen took a great charger, full of flowers, with an intent to present all the ladies there present, with nosegays made of carnations, roses, and orange flowers mixed together, (for at Rome you may have any sort of flowers at any season of the year;) they were tied together with a golden twist, to which was fastened a fair knot of about three or four yards of ribbon; so that each nosegay could not be worth less than two crowns, or thereabouts. The first of these was presented to the fair Agnes; and I took notice, that there was a little note conveyed between the flowers, which she immediately took thence and put into her Hours, or book of devotion, to peruse it. It was not possible for me to discern the contents, and though I was very nigh to her, I could not discover any

more than these two words, *Mia Diva*,—my goddess. No sooner were these nosegays distributed, but there came flying from the upper galleries of the church, a vast quantity of printed papers, which the people strove to catch. These prints contained sonnets in the praise of St. Agnes, but which really and indeed reached the lady, much more than the saint, for the poem was almost a continual allusion to victories; being a sufficient hint they were calculated for her, whose name was Victorini. This concert of music lasted almost four hours, and it was very late before all was over; however, so exceeding charming and delightful was the music, that it seemed to me I had not been above half an hour in the church.

The next day I returned thither again, and was present at the whole service; which was celebrated with all the pomp and solemnity imaginable. All the morning they celebrated a great number of masses, and many abbots (to honour the young Carpagna and his misstress,) came and said masses at the altar, but now mentioned, before the fair image. At the beginning of high mass, they threw down from the upper gallery other sonnets; some of them in praise of St. Agnes, and others in commendation of the young gentleman, who was the master of the festival; for the priests of this church finding themselves much obliged to him, for that he had been pleased to make choice of their church for this solemnity (whence they always reap a considerable profit) had caused this poem to be made in praise of his great devotion and extraordinary worth. There are a sort of men in Italy whom they call Virtuosi, or Poets, who make a livelihood of praising others; that is, of making encomiastical songs or poems. Neither is it expensive to make use of their wit; for if you do but give them the subject, they furnish you with a good one for a single

crown; so that you are at no further charges, save only that of printing it.

It was one in the afternoon, by that time the morning service was ended, when the ladies retired to their own homes, and the gentlemen with the priests, to an apartment near the Church of Peace, whither they had taken care to send abundance of provisions, to make a sumptuous dinner. The musicians retired into the sextry, whither, some hours after, they sent in to them several large dishes of meat, abundance of all sorts of wine, with sugar and cooling waters. The notes, distributed to that purpose, specified, that the second evening song was to begin about three in the afternoon; wherefore I made it my business to be there about that time; but I found I was come too soon, for the musicians had not dined yet, more dishes of meat being still sent in to them, neither did service begin till about five; and the same order was observed as at the former evening song, except only, that the verses and anthems were changed, and that the ladies (before they departed) were not only presented with nosegays, as before, but with great chargers of sweetmeats, with which they filled their handkerchiefs, and so returned home laden with flowers and fruits. The young Carpagna, not a little proud and pleased, for having so magnificently discharged all the parts of that solemnity, received the congratulatory applause of all his companions; and another of them, (whose turn was next) appointed the next Sunday for a like festival, to be celebrated at the church of St. Andrew of the Valley, where he had ordered all things to be prepared for the solemnizing of the feast of St. Catherine.

I was willing, Sir, somewhat to enlarge myself in the description of the particulars of this feast; not as if it were a thing rare and extra-

ordinary, (for, indeed, what I have here related is but as one of a thousand that I have seen, and which it would be very superfluous to repeat to you, there being indeed nothing more common in Italy;) but my design was only to give you a more distinct idea of this thing, when you shall chance to hear any discourse cancerning these Italian feasts. I have lived seven years in that country, and in all that time, never did a week pass over my head, in which I was not present at some or other of them; wherefore, I have reason to be able, to speak with good ground concerning them.

But more particularly, we meet with these kind of feast very frequently in convents and monasteries; the religious whereof may be distinguished into three sorts, either such as are endowed with means for their subsistence, as generally all those called monks are, or else they live partly of their incomes, and partly of alms, as are all those who are called Frati or friars; or lastly, they are such as live wholly upon alms, as the Capuchins, and other mendicant orders. Now each of thhse are very ambitious, and do their utmost endeavours to have these feasts made in their churches. The monks desire it, to make a show of their riches and grandeur; the whole ceremony is carried on at their own charges, and the feast they make is called a *Pontifical*, and is indeed, the most pompous and magnificent show that can be seen.

I will endeavour to give you here the most exact description of it that I possibly can. To this purpose I will take for my subject one which I saw in the famous abbey of St. Michael, in Bosco of Bononia, where I taught for two years together, the monks whereof are of the order of Mount Olivet. The abbot is not commendatory but regular, and has the power of officiating pontifically. He

caused his pontifical to be published in Bononia, three weeks before the feast of St. Bernard, the founder of their order, which happened to be on a Thursday; and accordingly the first even-song began on Wednesday in the evening. The church of this abbey is quite a jewel of a thing, for the extraordinary curiosity of the marble, jasper, and porphyry stones, that do in part compose and embellish it; the gilding and painting that adorn it are of an inestimable price; the roof and all the walls are gilt; the high altar, as well as the other lesser ones of the chapel, are all of precious stones. All the seats of the choir are of in-laid work, wherein the whole life of St. Bennet, and many histories of the Bible are represented: the balustrades of iron, that shut the choir and chapels, are all gilt, and very delicately wrought; the pavement is of black and white marble; insomuch that there is not the least part in the whole church, that stands in need of any superadded ornament. Yet notwithstanding all this, the abbot sent for the most dexterous adorners of churches to set it forth, with the silken *machins* of Bononia. with which all the windows and walls of the church were filled, affording various historical representations; though to speak the truth, this was a very useless cost, because what was hid by these silken figures was more curious and costly, than the figures themselves. He ordered arms of silver to be fixed round the church, and candlesticks of the same, to be placed on all the cornices and pillars of the church, to support a prodigious number of white wax candles, which were to burn all the time of the service. The high altar was set as thick as it could hold with plate, brought out out of the treasury of that abbey, to make a shew of it to all men. About three in the afternoon, the abbot, (accompanied by all his monks) and many gentlemen of his re-

lations and friends following him, marched forwards towards the church. He was apparelled in the habit of his order, being distinguished from the rest of the monks by his ring, his hood, and his four cornered cap. The monks of this abbey, are wont to enter into the church by the gate of the cloister, which is near to the choir; but for the more state, and to make a great show of their abbot in all his pomp and majesty, they chose this time to come out of the monastery, and to make a round, in order to their entering the church by the great gate, at the west end of it. As soon as they entered, the bells, organs, and other musical instruments sounded a march; and as for the monks, they gave forth such an air in their going, as discovered rather the vanity of their hearts, than that majesty which becomes the ministers at the altar.

When they were come into the church, the abbot made a halt before the chapel of St. Bernard, which is at the lower end of the church, and kneeled down upon cushions of violet-coloured velvet, very richly embroidered, which lay upon a desk, covered with a carpet of the same, garnished with a rich golden fringe. And at the same time the musicians sung an anthem in praise of that saint. After this the abbot was conducted to his throne, which they had erected on the right side of the altar. It was covered on high with a magnificent canopy of state, and surrounded with several seats, very richly adorned, for all the officers that were to officiate at the pontifical. Being arrived here, he seated himself, having two abbots, his friends, on each side of him, and immediately fourteen of his monks, in their surplices, went and took the ornaments that were laid on tables placed near the high altar, wherewith he was to be invested; and having each of them taken what belonged to their place, they ranged themselves

one behind another making a long row. The first of them carried, in a large silver gilt charger, the abbatical buskins; the second, in another like charger, the abbatical shoes, of violet-coloured velvet, richly embroidered; a third carried the coif; a fourth the rochet; which, as also the coif, was of most fine linen, laced round about, and at the hands with a very curious point de Venice of a foot deep; the fifth followed with a very costly girdle of white silk, woven and wrought to admiration; the sixth carried the stole; the seventh and eighth each of them a tunicle of white taffety; the ninth had the cap, which, like the stole, was of cloth of gold, the edges of it being raised by embroidery into several curious figures, composed of seed-pearl, and furnished with golden clasps; the tenth carried the little cross of diamonds, valued at two thousand crowns; the eleventh, in a great charger gilt and enamelled, carried the abbatical gloves; and the twelfth the abbatical ring, being an amethyst of an extraordinary size; the thirteenth followed with the mitre, thick set with pearls and precious stones; and the fourteenth, and last, carried the crosier or pastoral staff. Every one of these in order, as they drew near to the abbot, (seated on his throne,) bowed the knee before him; and after they had delivered their several charges into the hand of the assistant abbots, who were to attire their prelate, having first worshipped him with another genuflexion, retired again in good order. At every ornament that was put upon him, there were particular prayers, which the assistant abbots repeated, and the officiating prelate read himself in the pontifical book, which was supported by two monks; and two others, in their surplices and tunicles, held wax candles to light him, whilst the master of the ceremonies turned the leaves for him.

The abbot being accoutred with all these orna-

ments, and having the mitre on his head, seated himself on his throne in the midst of the two abbots assistants; and immediately all the officers who were to officiate at the ceremony, ranged themselves near to him. These officers were four chaunters in their rochets and hoods, four sub-chaunters in their surplices, two deacons in their stoles and tunicles, two sub-deacons in their tunicles, two taper-bearers to hold the candlesticks, and two incense-bearers, drest in surplices and their silver censers in their hands; besides another officer to hold the crosier-staff, and the master of ceremonies with his rod or wand. All these were only to officiate till the middle of even-song; at which time, as if they had been extremely tired with the attendance they had given, they were relieved by others yet more gorgeously apparelled, who were to officiate till the service was ended. Their music was very numerous and choice. The abbot sung the first verse of even-song, which was continued by the music and singing men with abundance of ceremonies, which I shall not enlarge upon at present, that which I have already delivered being sufficient to give you an idea of that extraordinary majesty and external pomp wherewith feasts are solemnized in the churches of Italy. For in case it be a bishop, or archbishop that officiates, the magnificence is much greater; and if it be a cardinal or pope that celebrates the feast, these ceremonies are carried to the highest point of elevation and grandeur imaginable.

I remember to have read somewhere in an English Protestant author, the commendations and eulogies he bestows upon those of the Roman communion, in this point of ceremonies, saying, "in this only are they praiseworthy, and [illegible] commended, that they spare nothing [illegible] contribute to the costliness and solemni[illegible]

feasts." For my own part, I have very industriously applied myself to search out the principle from whence so much false lustre doth proceed, which they make use of in the Church of Rome, to dazzle the eyes of the inconsiderate and unthinking people; and I have found that it is not their great zeal for the house of God that is the motive of it, but only interest, vain-glory, and self-love, as I abundantly discovered upon this occasion.

The even-song ended about six o'clock in the evening; after which the abbot and his officers, having put off their ornaments, went into the sextry, where they found great tables covered and thick set with dry and wet confects, neats' tongues, Bononia sausages, and fine pastry meat. All the ladies and gentlemen of quality that were in the church, were desired to enter; as for myself, having a free access to that abbey, as being in a manner one of the family, because I publicly taught there the liberal arts, and had a good allowance, besides the abbot's table; I entered into the sextry with them, and had moreover the privilege of bringing some Frenchmen of my acquaintance in with me, who are now in London. The gentlemen and ladies were not wanting to bestow great encomiums on the abbot, each declaring how admirably well his pontifical habit did become him, and how gracefully he did officiate.

The abbot (during the entertainment) addressed himself to two ladies of quality, the one a lady Marquess, and the other a Countess; and demanded of them whether they had not found a desire stirring in them to persuade some of their children to become a religious of his order? The lady Marquess answered, "she would consider of it." But the Countess very frankly assured [illegible]hat she had been so extremely satisfied [illegible]ontifical, which had been celebrated

with so much pomp and majesty, that it had even ravished her, and that she was absolutely resolved her son should take the habit of the order." She told the abbot "that the Jesuits did their utmost endeavours to draw him over to them, but that she would be sure to break all their measures, and hoped that her son would behave so well in the monastery, that one day she might have the joy and comfort to see him made abbot of the order, and pontifically officiating."

It is impossible, Sir, you should not take notice, in all that I have related to you concerning the solemnity of this feast, what indeed were the true motives of it. The abbot hereby pleased his vain-glorious humour, by appearing in a pontifical dress, with so many pompous ornaments, amidst so many adorations and so many incensings as were presented to him. Besides this, he made also his advantage of it; for from hence he took occasion to solicit persons of quality, after he had dazzled their eyes with the magnificent splendour of his pontificial, to persuade their children to take the habit of the order. I know very well how gainful it is to the abbot and other principal officers of the abbey, when the children of persons of quality take upon them the habit. They never admit them to the profession till their parents have presented them very liberally, besides the annual pension they are bound to allow their son; and the more honourable the persons are, the more considerable still are the presents that are made them. The rest of the religious find their pleasure and satisfaction in these festivals; their eyes are feasted with the sumptuous adorning of the churches, and their ears with the sweetness of the most choice and exquisite music; neither is the feast that concludes the solemnity, and the ladies' company, the least charm to make them desirable. So that, in a

word, the glory of God, and the zeal of his holy temple, are at the best, and to speak most favourably, but the more remote object of these pompous solemnities.

I have already told you in one of my letters, that I feared to pass for a severe censor in your judgment, who takes pleasure to put a rigorous sense upon actions, otherwise capable of a favourable interpretation: and for this reason I always back what I say with the reasons that indnce me to pass these sorts of judgments; and I question not in the least, but that if you will be pleased well to weigh them, youwill find that I have used abundance of moderation in my expressions. To apply this therefore to the present subject, I shall proceed to tell you, that the festival of St. Francis of Rome approaching, on which day the abbot had promised the ladies another pontifical, preparations were made for greater pomp and splendour than before had been at the feast of St. Bernard. They had sent for musicians from Florence and Venice, who, two days before the feast, were arrived at the abbey, where they were very splendidly entertained. The evening before the abbot and the monks prayed heartily for fair weather: and the air being at this time very clear and serene, there was all the appearance imaginable that it would continue so, which hopes filled them with unutterable joys. There was only one good old convert friar amongst them, who being better informed than all this, by the twitches his corns gave him, very peremptorily averred it would rain the next day. Upon this ominous intimation, the abbot himself went out after supper, to star-gaze what weather they were likely to have the next day; and seeing the sky so clear and full of stars, declared there was no need to fear but they should have a fair day of it, and that the old friar was a *turba festa*, a mere trouble-feast, to talk so at ran-

dom. Upon this assurance the monks retired to their apartments that evening with a great deal of joy. But about midnight the weather changed, and the next morning there fell so furious a shower, that it was impossible to stir abroad without being wet to the skin. This tempestuous weather continued all night, which seized the spirits of the poor monks with a strange consternation. The next morning they appeared all pale-faced, and gave evident proof how great a change crossed desires are able to produce in the body of man. Some of them openly murmured against heaven, because that almost every year it disturbed or disappointed their feast of St. Francis; others of them retained still some hope that the rain might hold up within a few hours; but alas! their hopes were all in vain; the heavens were too resolved, and the storm was so far from ceasing or diminishing, that it increased more and more. The abbot perceiving there was no remedy, sent word to the sexton to shut up the ornaments of the pontifical; however, he ordered the music should play, because the musicians were present, and that most of them were paid beforehand; but he forbad the great rows of wax candles to be lighted, which had been disposed of round the church, or to burn the incense that had been prepared for the altars. So that, excepting only the music, the office was very simply and plainly celebrated after the ordinary manner. The abbot did not appear at it himself, and all this great pomp and solemnity vanished into smoke.

Now I desire you, Sir, only to draw, a rational and obvious consequence from all these proceedings. Can you persuade yourself, that God or the saint were the object or motive of all this ado? God is immense and infinite, every where present, whether it be fair or foul; and the saint also is supposed to be always the same in heaven. How

came it to pass then that the solemnity was changed and put off; but because the gentlemen and ladies that had been invited, and for whose sake the feast was intended, could not come? *sublatâ causâ tollitur effectus;*—take away the cause, and the effect ceaseth. Or can we draw a more just consequence, or more proper to stop the mouths of our adversaries of the Romish communion, who object to us their divine service, as celebrated with so much pomp and magnificence, and who find so much fault with the modesty and simplicity of ours? When they celebrate their matins, or morning service of their greatest holidays before day-light, they scarcely light two wax candles on the altar, (because, say they, nobody frequents them,) whereas in the day time, when there is abundance of company, they light a matter of three or four hundred. May we not, therefore, with great reason reproach them, that all their pompous feasts and solemnities are only to satisfy their own pleasure, vain-glory, and avarice? And that therefore God abhors and abominates these their services; so far are they from being any proof of the truth of their religion. In the mean time I must needs acknowledge, this is that which deludes many, and is a stone of offence to all those, who in matters of religious worship consider only that which strikes the senses.

I knew a Papist in England, that was turned Protestant many years before, who told me he was returning again into Italy, in order to join himself to the Romish communion; and his reason was, because, forsooth, "the divine service was not solemnized here with that solemnity as it was in his country." I wonder why, by the dint of the same argument, he was not persuaded to turn Jew, who use yet more ceremonies than the Church of Rome: or rather I am astonished he did not consider with himself, that all these cere-

monies and pompous vanities, being only arbitrary things, which depend only on the will of men, the Protestants were they inclined that way, might contrive and institute such as should be more magnificent than those of Rome, and might make their bishops to appear every day in as pompous ornaments as the Pope does on St. Peter's day: and if they do not do it the reason is, because they are well persuaded, that what is most pleasing in the eyes of men, is not always the most acceptable to God, who requires pure and holy hearts, and not rich and pompous apparel; and to whom the fervency of our prayers is far more acceptable than clouds of the sweetest incense. Besides the service and worship of God, as it is celebrated in their churches, is not altogether destitute of decent ornaments neither. The ministers' habit is such as to distinguish them from all others in their ministry, but yet so as to be without any thing of superstition. There is no divine virtue attributed to it, that renders the wearers thereof more holy than others; whereas in the Church of Rome should a priest celebrate mass without his hood or amict, and that wilfully, they hold it to be a mortal sin.

I return now to our feasts again, and having given you an account how the same are celebrated by those monks who live upon their incomes; I shall proceed now to those of other religious, who partly live on incomes and partly on alms, who are the same as those who live altogether on alms, and are well known in Italy by the name of *Frati*. During my stay at Rome I went to the Minerva, which is a famous convent of the Dominicans; it was on a Saturday, at which time they were celebrating a festival in honour of the Rosary of the blessed Virgin. I learned that the heads of that confraternity met every Saturday, and did every one of them by turns celebrate the feast of the

Rosary at their own charges. It is the humour of the Italians, in such like cases, to strive for the honour of surpassing one another, and spare no cost, to the end they may in magnificence outvie others; this is an emulation that is natural to them, and which I believe cannot with good ground be attributed to their virtue, because herein they feed their vanity as much as in those sumptuous cavalcades they make, and in which (after the same manner) their great aim is to outdo one another.

These religious, or *Frati*, have contrived a form of feast for their own tooth. The monks, (as was said before) make them at their own charges, and to set forth their riches and glory; but these always celebrate them upon other men's purses, and with such caution, as withal, to fill their own into the bargain. The laws they have established to this purpose, are—that whosoever causeth a feast to be solemnized, must send beforehand a sufficient sum of money, to defray all the masses that the religious of the convent do celebrate that day. In the second place, he must be at the charge of adorning the chapel or church where the feast is to be kept; and in the third place he is obliged to send in a splendid dinner for all the good friars of the convent. Some among them, for this very reason, do very aptly call these feasts, "the friar's milch cows." As for those friars who are called mendicants, such as the Capuchins, and others, who live wholly on alms, as they cannot, by reason of their vow of poverty in common, receive any money for their masses, there is this difference, that instead of delivering the money for that purpose into their own hands, it is to be paid to him whom they call their temporal father, that is, a layman, who has the disposal of their money for their use, and whom they call every month to an account, even

to the utmost farthing. Their patriarch, St. Francis, never dreamed of this piece of subtlety, and consequently also, he has not made the least mention of it in his rule, or directory; but as for these good fathers, they have quite outdone him in refined wit and invention. They do not think it convenient, so wholly to rely upon the Divine Providence, as not to think their own the more safe and sure way. What would you have us do? (say they) alas! the times are changed, and laymen are not so charitable now, as they were in the time of St. Francis! For my part, I durst undertake to prove to their faces, that in case they lived with as much frugality as their ancient fathers, (who, to speak truth, are of no great antiquity neither) they would find superstitious people enough, to furnish them with a sufficiency, for a sober and penitential diet. But who would take delight to incommode themselves, to cram a company of lazy lubbers, who do nothing but go about from house to house to fill their bellies, especially leading so scandalous a life as they do? True it is, that by their cunning they have so ordered the matter, that they want for nothing; and one of the best inventions they have ever yet found out, to be sumptuously and delicately treated, is their feasts.

And forasmuch, as a regular feast, I mean those that are marked in the almanack, are only to be found once in the year, they have invented the useful contrivance of confraternities, as being most fruitful nurseries of feasts or holidays for them, so as even to produce many for them in one and the same week. A confraternity, according to the definition they give us of it, is an association of many persons, who unite themselves and agree together, at certain times, to render some religious worship to God, to the Virgin, or to some other saint, in such a manner as

is not common to all: but at the bottom, it is indeed nothing else, but the most sure and refined art the Church of Rome has to catch money; and they have always some good crafty father or other, that has the trade of drawing in people at his finger's end, who is the director of it. It is to him all those that desire to be admitted to the confraternity, must address themselves, where, (for writing down his name in the book, and for entrance money,) it costs him a crown at least; and every year at the same day, he must come to have his name renewed, and pay over the same entrance money, as at his first admittance, otherwise you are without mercy most ignominiously expelled the confraternity, and from that time forwards, are excluded from having any share in their prayers, or partaking of their indulgences. Over and above all this, there is some money to be paid every month, towards the lights of the chapel, where the confraternity is erected; which, considering the vast number of those that are enrolled in it, produceth a prodigious sum of money.

The least confraternities that are, consist of three or four hundred persons; there are some have a thousand, yea, two or three thousand belonging to them. I have myself seen above twenty thousand names enrolled in the book of the confraternity of the Scapulary of the Carmelites of Milan; and in that of the great confraternity of the Rosary of St. John, and St. Paul of Venice, I have been certainly informed there are above forty thousand brothers. Suppose every one of the brethren should only give a penny every month towards the chapel lights, it would be impossible to burn all the wax candles that money would buy; which by consequence turns to the profit of these good friars. They are continually hankering about the richest persons of

their confraternity, endeavouring to persuade them to make a feast in honour of the saint, in whose name their confraternity is erected.

I happened once to be in the company of an Italian count, who was of the confraternity of the Little Scapulary of the Virgin, erected in the great convent of the Carmelites at Rome, at the time when the father director of the confraternity came in to him, and told him with a smiling countenance, *Conte Giovanni*, I have a great complaint against you, from one of your very good friends. The count supposing it to be one of his mistresses, asked him, who it was? The director answered, that it was from the blessed Virgin, and that he had no reason to doubt, but that she was very angry with him, for having for so long a time neglected, to cause the feast of the holy Scapulary to be celebrated. The count excused himself upon the account of some extraordinary business, that had put him by his thoughts that way; and desired the director to send him in next week the list of their religious. When he was departed, the count told me, that what he had told him, implied as much, as that he would make the feast of the Scapulary the next week; because, on the like occasion it is customary to send in as many couples of capons and bottles of wine, as there be religious in the convent, besides money to pay for the masses that are to be said that day; so that his demanding a list of the director, was a full intimation that he had granted his suit; and accordingly, he took his leave very well satisfied, saying, he would take care to pacify his friend. The count told me afterwards, that this feast would cost him a round sum, because commonly the note of the director of the confraternity mounted very high, as well for the lights, as for the musicians and adorners of the church.

After all this, it cannot be denied but that those of the Roman communion are certainly fallen in love with their own blindness, in that they will not so much as take the pains to open their eyes, to see how miserably these fellows gull and cheat them: For what can be imagined more ridiculous, than all these sorts of confraternities? Because St. Francis, forsooth, wore a cord or rope instead of a girdle, they have erected a confraternity in honour of it; accordingly every brother of the society must wear a small cord; these small cords or bands, do not in the least resemble that which St. Francis wore, which I have seen at Assise, and is as thick as some of the greatest ropes that wind up buckets in a well; but these are very delicately wrought, and very artificially knotted in several places. The custom is, to bless them publicly, with many ceremonies and prayers; which being performed, they tell us, they have the virtue to blot out all venial sins; to drive away the devil, and troublesome temptations of the flesh. Most of the ladies of Italy wear the cord of St. Francis; they tye them round about their bodies, and the ends of them reach the bottom of their petticoats; they are full of pretty little knots, and they serve them to play withal, as the English ladies do with their fans or masks. Were it true indeed, that these cords had the power of repressing carnal temptations, the ladies of Italy who wear such lovely ones, could not fail from being the chastest women in the world; and yet I am sure, this is not the commendation that is given them. But be it as it will, the cord is a thing so extraordinarily holy, that great feasts are celebrated in honor of it every week in all the churches belonging to the Franciscans; and the Popes have been pleased to bestow great indulgences to all those, who shall enroll themselves in this society of the

cord. They are only the poor Protestants that do not enjoy all these fair advantages, because they look upon them as no better than mere folly; and for my part, I believe they have very good reason for being of this opinion; and that the surest and safest way is, to believe with them, that the only thing that can make us proof against all temptations, and endue us with power to overcome sin, is the grace of God, and that by means of it alone, we shall become conquerors over the devil, the flesh, and the world, without the assistance of either rope or cord.

The confraternity of the Rosary is no less superstitiously founded than the foregoing. Since the salutation of the angel Gabriel to the Virgin, has past in the Church of Rome for the most holy prayer that can be made to her, the father Dominicans, who pretend to be the greatest favourites of the holy Virgin, to the end they might have some particular devotion to distinguish them from the common, have invented that which is now called the Rosary, which is nothing else but an aggregation of several Ave Maries; there are ten times ten of them in the Rosary, and at the end of each ten they add the Lord's prayer. And to the end they may not fail of saying the just number (for in case one only Ave Mary should chance to be omitted, it would be the loss of the whole indulgence) they have brought into use their *Paternosters*, or beads, by which they count the prayers as they say them, that there may be no mistake. And as it is the belief of the Church of Rome, that the elements and material subjects of the sacraments, are not only signs, but physical instrumental causes, producing grace in the soul: for they say, that the water in baptism, the oil in extreme unction, and the matter presented in the collation of orders, do physically produce grace in the soul; so in like manner the Popes have

affixed to these beads of wood, glass, or any other matter, the graces and privileges that belong to the Rosary: so that if a person should repeat all the prayers ordered and established for the Rosary, without having one of these *Paternosters*; yea, though (to be exact in his tale) he should count them on his buttons or fingers, yet would he not thereby obtain the indulgence: no, by no means, there must be *Paternosters* in the case, as being the instrumental causes of producing grace in the soul. There are scarcely any Italians but have their *Paternosters* about them, eitheir in their pockets, or hanging about their necks, between their shirts and their doublets. The ladies carry them on their arms, and they have now-a-days made an ornamental bravery of it, not inferior to their necklaces and bracelets of pearls and diamonds. They sometimes go abroad without either fan or mask, but never without their beads. The most common, for women of a mean condition, are of coral or amber; but the ladies of quality have them of precious stones, or of odoriferous pastes, adorned with the most curious ribbons, and garnished with abundance of gold and silver medals. The greatest prostitutes would be ashamed to go abroad without their great *Paternosters* on their arms, which hang down to their feet; not that their devotion is so great in running of them over, but merely because it is customary, and a kind of necessary implement for them to trifle with, which they cannot well be without.

The little Scapulary, or habit of the Virgin, is a piece of the same worth and value, and belongs to the Carmelites; for it is their own habit to which they make people pay so great respect, and so many adorations. These fathers were originally hermits, who had their place of retirement on Carmel. They pretend, that the blessed

Virgin appeared to them there, and gave them the form of the habit they were to wear, which is a vest and scapulary of a brown colour, and a great white hood; and that she told them at the same time, that all those who should wear that habit should be blessed by her, and her Son Jesus Christ, and should never die in any mortal sin. Now, forasmuch as it is not possible to persuade all the world to become Carmelites, that so they might enjoy the privileges of this miraculous habit, they have found out a way to cut their old habits into little square pieces of the bigness of four or five fingers breadth, which they, (for their money) bestow upon laymen to wear about them. They have persons on purpose standing at the doors of their churches, who sell them for four pence or five pence a-piece. Certainly, this is the best improvement of old clothes that ever was thought of, and the most excellent invention never to want new ones, and to be always well clad, that could possibly be imagined. And, indeed, I scarcely remember ever to have seen any Carmelites, that were not very well accoutered, and that with new clothes too. True it is, there are some of those to be sold, that are very curiously wrought over with silk, for those, who not contenting themselves with these foolish devotions, must needs have them set forth with abundance of vanity; but, however, the ground of them must always be a shred of a Carmelite's old frock. They have instituted several confraternities in honour of this holy habit; they celebrate great feasts every week, with most exquisite music, and have particular masses said in reverence and respect to this habit. As for this little scapulary, as well as the Rosary, St. Francis's cord, the blest pastes and medals of our Lady of Loretto, it is still one and the same song; it, as all the rest, forgives venial sins, prevents one's dying in mortal sin,

and procures a speedy deliverance from the flames of purgatory. I desire you, Sir, to represent to yourself a poor Roman Catholic with all this gear and harness about him, one of the little scapularies on his back, St. Francis's rope about his waste, a rosary or great paternoster in his hand; abundance of medals and blest pasts, images, written prayers, and saints' bones, about his neck, upon his breast, or in his pockets, who is cocksure, that by means of these he shall not only escape hell, but also the scorching flames of purgatory. What think you? Have we not all the reason in the world, to write above his head in great characters, *Error and Superstition?* On the other hand, set before your eyes a good Protestant, who neglecting all these things, wholly applies himself to live well, placing all his confidence in God alone, and the merits of his Saviour Jesus Christ; and then tell me sincerely, and without bias, which of both has more reason of his side, and better ground for what he does. And yet this error and superstition is so deeply rooted in the minds of the Papists, that there is scarcely any way left to disabuse and unhoodwink them, so fatally have their priests and monks enchanted them.

I knew in Germany, a German captain, who had no great faith in all these confraternities and contrived devotions. I tabled at his house in the city of Mentz; whenever there happened to be any discourse concerning them, he always discovered his aversion to them, and declared with abundance of reason, that they were only the effects of monk and priest craft to get money; and that he believed, God would most severely punish them for it in the other world, as well as those who suffered themselves to be abused by such follies. This captain, sometime after, fell into a consumption, and about three or four hours

before his death, I was with him in his chamber, and forasmuch as he had still the free use of his senses and speech, he discoursed concerning the things of eternal life; and (as a good father) exhorted his children, who stood about his bed, to an honest and truly christian life. Whilst he was thus employed, in comes a Father Dominican, who had been sent for by the mistress of the house. He was the director of the confraternity of the rosary, and drawing near to the dying man, with a great paternoster in his hand, he exhorted him to enroll himself in the confraternity before his death. The sick man desired him not to interrupt the exhortation he was giving to his children, which might be of far more profit to them than his rosary; the words of a dying father to h ischildren remaining commonly imprest on their minds as long as they live. The Dominican giving little heed to all this, obstinately prosecuted his design, repeating continually to him, that should he come to die without enrolling his name in the confraternity, he would lie a tedious while in purgatory, and that there he would have time enough, and to spare, to repent him at leisure. The sick man told him, If you believe it to be so good and saving a thing for my soul, why do you not then set down my name of your own accord? But the father not finding his account in this, continued to fright and terrify the patient; who at last being scared by the horrid representations he had made him, cried out to his wife, pray give him a crown, and let him write down my name. Whereupon, the father, after he had given him a Paternoster, went his way, and as he was going out of doors, told his wife, that in case he had not happily come to her husband, he would have died like a dog. The good father having obtained his end, came no more to look after him; and this poor gentleman died about three or four hours after, with his great

bead-row about his neck. I confess, I should have been extremely surprised to see, that a man, who had all his life time witnessed so great an aversion for these foppish superstitions, should himself, at last, fall under them, a little before his death; I say, I should have been very much astonished at it, had I not myself heard the frightful discourse wherewith the Dominican entertained him, taking occasion from his weak and dying condition, to impress in his mind all the panic terrors of hell and purgatory; for he talked at such a rate to him, as if it were possible for him(without giving his consent to be admitted of the confraternity, with a crown at the tail of it) to be ever saved, but would be sure to be damn'd with all the devils in hell to all eternity.

See here, Sir, the goodly use is made of these confraternities, and what all these affected and contrived devotions of the Papists do end in. I am now entered into so large a field, and I have so many true stories to produce on this subject, that Ishould never make an end, should I once begin with them: and am therefore obliged, to the end this Letter may not swell too big, to pass them by in silence. Nevertheless, I think I cannot in reason exempt myself from giving you a word of information more, concerning the society of souls in purgatory. This is the most general of them all, as belonging to all churches, and to all priests, as well secular as regular: this is their true nursing mother; for in Italy the dead (which is strange) maintain the living, and the priests and the monks are the ravens and crows, that fatten and cram themselves with the carcases of the dead. This is that probably which inspires them with that inhuman cruelty and barbarity, that makes them desire the death of all men.

I shall not spend any time here to oppose the false opinion of purgatory, because being a point

of doctrine, it is no part of the task I have undertaken; but shall only acquaint you with the use made of it in the Church of Rome; and how dexterously the priests and monks have turned it to their great gain and advantage. I cannot but own, that a person who is persuaded of the existence of a purgatory, and that so dreadful a one as the Roman Catholics represent to us, cannot but apprehend it is his interest to think seriously of it; and according to this persuasion, I do not think it strange, if a Papist in his last will appropriates some considerable part of his estate for prayers and masses to be said for the relief of his soul after death, or even his bestowing something by way of charity, to have them said for others also; but when this is done with indiscretion and excess, and to the great prejudice of one's neighbour, this is a thing I can in no wise approve of. I know well, that in this point I shall have all the clergy of the Roman communion against me; for they maintain, that in this case, there can be no indiscretion or excess committed, nor any prejudice or hurt done to any whatsoever, grounding themselves on this principle, (which they extremely misconstrue,) that a well ordered charity begins from a man's self; so that conformably to their hypothesis, a man that should disinherit all his children without any other cause, but the desire he has to bestow all his estate upon the priests, that they may pray to God, and say masses for his soul after his death, does them no injury at all; and that they would be ready to represent him as a man who did not consult with flesh and blood, in a case where the good of his own soul lay at stake, and was concerned.

I shall to this purpose relate to you a matter of fact, the remembrance only whereof doth still afflict and grieve me, because it proved the ruin of some persons, whom I was particularly ac-

quainted with. In a second journey I took to Rome, I took a lodging in the house of a very honest widow, who was plentifully provided for, her husband having left her a good estate; and forasmuch as she had no children, she took two of her sisters to live with her, and entertained them very charitably. The father Jesuits, who are far better acquainted with how many widows there are in Rome, than how many chapters there be in the Bible, had not forgot to set this good woman on their list; neither were they wanting in their diligence and application to court her, in hopes to get her estate. Her confessor, who probably wanted to have her in the other world, ordered her (during the greatest heats of summer) to take a journey to Loretto; which she failed not to perform; but returned very sick to Rome, where the physicians soon despaired of her recovery; whereupon she made her last will, whereby she left all her estate to her two sisters, except only two hundred livres, which she assigned for masses to be said for her after her decease. The father Jesuits had soon notice of this, and without delay presented themselves before the bed of their dying votary; they forgot nothing which they conceived might prevail with her to change her testament. They represented to her, that it was the greatest folly immaginable to bestow one's goods upon relations, who commonly were very unthankful; that her chiefest care ought to be, her own rest and happiness in the other world; that she might be sure her sisters would never be at a farthing charge, to procure prayers for her; yea, so far was it from that, that they had discovered, that her sisters fostered a secret and mortal hatred against her, and that consequently they should be glad to leave her to swelter a good while in purgatory. Last of all, they told her, that her sisters were too far engaged in a worldly

spirit, and would probably make a very ill use of the estate she should leave them; and that to leave them any money would be no better than to trust a knife in the hand of a child, or fool, who might hurt themselves therewith: and by this means, said they, she would give an occasion to her sisters of offending God, and damning their own souls, and consequently would become responsible therefore before God: that her sisters could work, and so might honestly gain their livelihood with the labour of their hands, which at the same time would secure them from idleness, which is the mother of all vices. These reasons being uttered with all the artifice and rhetoric imaginable, prevailed with the poor widow, whom a violent fever and the pangs of approaching death made yet more apprehensive of the pains of purgatory; so that without any more ado she revoked her testament, and made but one article of it, disposing of all she had to the house of the Jesuits of Rome, that they might cause prayers and masses to be said for her. Thus she died in the midst of four Jesuits; and scarcely had they shut her eyes, but they turned her sisters out of doors, and possessed themselves of all that she had. These poor gentlewomen, with tears in their eyes, desired only that they would be pleased to give them some of their sister's clothes; but the Jesuits utterly refused it, saying, "That they could not dispose of the least thing belonging to their sister, for that all was to be turned into money to pray to God for her soul, who was now actually burning in the flames of purgatory; so that they could not in conscience deprive her of the least refreshment or comfort, she had so wisely provided for herself."

What think you, Sir?—Is not this an excellent use that is made of the doctrine of purgatory by these wretched Jesuits? I will spend no more

time in representing to you the deformity and abominableness of the fact, since the sole recital of it evidenceth it as clear as the sun.

Now, to bring this false devotion more into request, and to procure ways and means of multiplying it, they teach in Italy, that the souls in purgatory are not only succoured and relieved by the prayers and masses of the priests, but that by the same means they become helps and assistants to others. If we will believe them, they assist persons upon earth in all their concerns and occasions; if any one has a suit at law, or is engaged in some troublesome business; or if a man be desirous to obtain a place, command, or dignity, the surest way, say they, in these cases, is to have recourse to these suffering souls, and to get a number of masses said for them; for then by way of gratitude and acknowledgment, they take all rubs out of one's way; they influence the spirits of the judges, and procure the favour of great men. If a man be to go a journey, there is nothing more common in Italy, than to send him away with this good prayer or wish, *Go, and may the blessed Virgin, St. Anthony of Padua, and the souls of purgatory accompany you every where, and deliver you from all dangers!* This is so universal, that even the boys who go to the Jesuits' school are taught, that if they would rise at the set hour in the morning, they must recommend themselves to the souls in purgatory over-night, before they go to sleep.

But pray, what appearance is there that those poor souls, who cannot help themselves, should be in a condition to concern themselves about and help others?—And if it be demanded who they are that entertain the people in this gross ignorance, is it not evident that they are no other than the priests and monks; and the motive for which they do it is purely their own interest. They

agree admirably well in the doctrine of purgatory, but in sharing the money that is assigned for the prayers, they are all of them together by the ears, and it is neither better nor worse, than catch that catch can.

A noble Venetian, in company where I happened to be present, gave a very pleasant relation of the sport he had on this occasion. He was left executor of a testament, and made the guardian of a pupil; the lady who was dead, had bequeathed a sum of money for two thousand masses, to be said for her. The monks and priests are very diligent to inform themselves, by means of their emisaries, when any person of quality dies, to the end they may prevent one another if they can, and get the masses for themselves. The Jesuits, as being the most crafty of all, had first got the scent of it, and before any others, addressed themselves to the noble Venetian; and as their custom is, they began to enlarge on the subject of their own praises, and averred, that there were no religious in the Church of God, who did celebrate masses with more modesty and devotion than themselves; and that the great zeal they had for the speedy deliverance of the deceased party, had induced them to come and desire the discharging of the two thousand masses left by her last will. They said it was an open shame to see in what a manner the other religious and secular priests did dispatch their masses with so much hurry and precipitation, that a mass did not last above half a quarter of an hour, and that without doubt, God was rather dishonoured than honoured by such services. The noble Venetian having heard this fair speech, told them, he was glad to see the great zeal they had for the soul of his kinswoman, though he was not so fully persuaded of the indevotion of all other ecclesiastics, as they seemed willing to represent them; that

they might say masses for the dead, as well as others; and that though he knew well that it was not lawful for the Jesuits, according to their constitution, to receive the least money for the masses they said; yet, because that he would not seem altogether to reject them, he would give them money for fifty of them. The Jesuits being sorely vexed thus to be put by the two thousand masses they had already devoured, retired themselves.

Soon after them the sacristans, or sextons of the Father Dominicans, were introduced; who represented, that they had in their churches of Castello, and of St. Giovanni and Paolo, many privileged altars, (these are altars to which the Popes have affixed so many indulgences, that if only one mass be said at them for any soul in purgatory, they are infallibly delivered thence,) they alleged besides, that all the other religious made no bones of it, to sing one high mass instead of many, and which they made to pass for an hundred common masses; but that as for them, they scorned any such sinister ways, and promised fairly to say them all, without the least abatement of the tale; and that moreover, to testify their superabundant kindness to the deceased party, they would, over and above the number, cause several masses to be sung for her on the grand privileged altar, in the chapel of the Holy Rosary. The noble Venetian, without taking any great notice of their discourse, treated them no better than the Jesuits; and having granted them only some few masses, sent them packing.

After them followed a great number of sextons of other religious houses, and all for the love of these two thousand masses. If a man might believe them, they were every one of them more holy than their brethren of other orders; all others, according to them, were persons without con-

science, without performing the obligations they took upon them. The Venetian, however, gave to every one of them a pretty competent number of masses, so that of the two thousand he had only five hundred left.

He sent in the evening one of his servants to the place of St. Mark, to inform the secular priests (who commonly have their walks there, to acquaint themselves where they may meet with money for their masses,) that the next morning his master would be there, in order to distribute a number of masses. According to his promise, the Venetian nobleman repaired thither with five hundred notes, (this being the way of giving masses in Italy, they give a note, whereupon he that hath received it goes and says mass, and enters it in the sexton's book, and then returns it to him who has given it him, to receive his money) and went up to the procuracies of St. Mark, which are the buildings surrounding the Place of St. Mark, and there pleased himself, throwing down these notes amongst them from some of the upper windows. There were about three or four hundred priests below greedily waiting for them; who, as soon as they saw the papers fly about, put themselves in a posture, to catch each of them the most they could. They pushed one another, they flung one another in the dirt, they beat one another, they plucked one another by the hair, and tore one another's bands and cassocks, whilst a great number of people looked on, and laughed at them. There can be no better way of representing this action, than by fancying to ourselves a crowd of common people, or rather of the scum or filth of the people, to whom some pieces of money are thrown out of the windows, as I saw some persons of quality did on the day of the coronation of their majesties King William and Queen Mary; for this was a perfect representation

of the behaviour of the good priests of the Roman church on this occasion. And seeing many in the scuffle had dropped their cloaks and hats, some of their companions more dexterous than they, who chose rather to get a hat or a cloak than a note, took them up, and having slyly conveyed them under their own, skulked away with two cloaks instead of one. The notes being thus distributed, or rather chance and force having thus disposed of them, these good priests departed, each of them to their several posts, to saytheir masses.

Probably, Sir, you will think very strange of this relation of the noble Venetian; yet I dare assure you, that you need not question the belief of every part of it. The priests and monks do agree the best in the world, and are but as one, as long as their common interest cements and keeps them together; but they are all at daggers-drawing when the least particular interest divides them. And as for those priests who drubbed one another in the Place of St. Mark, for to catch the assignations to say masses, that is no strange thing in Italy, I myself have seen it with my own eyes above an hundred times. Alas! they do far worse than this, for even while they are in the sextry, invested with their sacerdotal ornaments, they sometimes fight together for the priority or precedency in saying their masses, and call one another the most infamous names imaginable. The Italians in this also excuse them with a great deal of favourableness, or rather with too much indulgence. "What would you have them do? (say they,) they are a company of poor priests that live by their masses, and have nothing else to help themselves with; when that fails them, all fails them; and therefore they have great reason to exert their utmost activity for the obtaining them." However, I am not a little amazed that the bishops take no course to prevent these scandalous

disorders, and that they ordain so many priests without providing them with some benefices. There is nothing more scandalous in a clergy, than to see those who are the members of it reduced, by a necessity of subsistence, to base and mean actions, and altogether unworthy of their character. This disgrace cannot but with a great deal of reason, reflect upon their heads; and it is an evident demonstration either of their negligence to remedy it, or their want of charity to procure the means of it. The most part of these poor priests of Italy live by their masses, or else by filching when masses fail them. They take all they can get, even in the churches themselves; the chalices, the linen covering of the altar, the wax candles, the books, and in a word, all that comes to hand. Wherefore we need make no difficulty to believe what this noble Venetian averred, that some in the scuffle had stolen the cloaks of their companions.

Another thing mentioned in his discourse, and whereon I desire you to make some reflection, which is the great division and enmity of those religious who went to demand the masses. They accused one another as persons without conscience, and false and faithless in discharging the trust they took upon them, and for which they were paid. What the Jacobite said of the Cordelier, and the very same Cordelier said of the Jacobite, and so of the rest; and indeed herein they all spoke truth. It is a matter of common practice in Italy, that when any one sends money to a convent for a hundred masses, they content themselves with singing one, with the assistance of a deacon and sub-deacon. It is the prior or guardian of the college that sings it. They call this a mass sung, an high mass, a solemn mass; and they maintain that one of these masses is an equivalent

to many common ones. They call this making a reduction.

But pray, Sir, what can this singing, or these ceremonies, contribute towards the rendering one mass as efficacious as an hundred? I know a Protestant may easily solve this difficulty by saying, That one mass is as good as a hundred, and that a hundred are of no more value than one, because they are good for naught, whether singly or aggregately considered. But you, who are a Roman Catholic, how can you answer this? If you have ever so little sincerity, you cannot but own that your priests and monks are not only content for to satisfy their covetousness, to make use of the doctrine of purgatory to induce laymen to lavish their money for the celebrating of masses, but that after all this, they would by this artifice of reduction, exempt themselves from the trouble of saying them.

The deceased Pope, Innocent the Eleventh, was no way favouring this trick of reduction; for being informed that the Carmelites of Naples had celebrated a mass in music, to acquit themselves of all the masses they were obliged to say, he sent down a commission to examine the registers and books of the sextry; and upon examination there were found no less than four and forty thousand masses which were not discharged. Innocent being acquainted herewith, did not believe that so vast a number of masses could ever be satisfied by one mass only, how solemn soever it might be. He let them know, that seeing they had received the money, they ought to say them with the first; and because they had not priests enough in their convent to celebrate them, they must take in some secular priests to their assistance. The thing taking wind, and being divulged through Naples, many stranger priests went and presented themselves to celebrate some of them,

and for fifteen days they admitted them; within which time they said four thousand masses at several altars; and the fathers paid them at the rate of the one half of what they received for them. At the end of three weeks, some priests whom I was acquainted with, came and told me, that having been to offer themselves, to say more masses for them, they were refused, and told, "that all the masses were already celebrated;" though indeed it were a thing absolutely impossible for so many masses to be said in that compass of time. But the truth of the matter was, that they were grieved to the heart to squander their money thus abroad, and therefore were resolved rather to tell a gross lie than to part with any more. They alleged for their excuse, "they had celebrated several masses at their privileged altar." This is another stratagem of those priests, which is never a whit inferior to that of reduction, and against which the Popes have nothing to allege; for otherwise they would contradict themselves, as to the power they pretend to have over the affairs of purgatory.

These privileged altars, (as was hinted before) are such as he endowed with great indulgences. To obtain one of these altars, great sums of money must be given; but what care they, as long as the bubbled multitude refund it an hundred fold. A mass celebrated at these sorts of altars, on such a day of the week, which commonly is Monday, doth infallibly deliver a soul out of purgatory; and a man who should dare question this, would be looked upon as an heretic, and committed to the Inquisition, as if he had denied one of the fundamentals of Christianity. According now to this principle they argue thus; (and indeed, granting their supposition, I find their argument strong enough). "The Pope (say they) grants a privilege to one of our altars, and declares, that when

any shall procure a mass to be said there for any soul in purgatory, though the most obnoxious that is there, it shall in the same moment be delivered thence. Now, the Pope is infallible in all his decrees, especially about the concerns of the other world: wherefore to draw a conclusion, we have money sent us to celebrate so many hundred or thousand masses, to say for such a man or woman; what is to be done in this case? *Frustra fit per plura, quod fieri potest per pauciora*—It is a folly to go about, when there lies a short cut before us. We will therefore cause one mass to be said at our privileged altar, which will infallibly deliver the party concerned out of purgatory, and will trouble ourselves no farther about saying the rest; forasmuch as they, being only in order to procure the same end, would be altogether superfluous and unprofitable; so that by this fair way we have (without the least pains-taking) gained a good lump of money, as well as without the least discomposure to our peace of conscience."—This argument was once most vigorously enforced against the Jesuits of Rome, upon this occasion:—

A rich merchant by his last will had left them his estate, to have so many millions of masses said for the deliverance of his soul, from purgatory after his death. His near kinsman, who of right was to have been his heir, being made acquainted with his will, lost no time; but as soon as he was dead, went to the Jesuits and gave them money to say a mass at their privileged altar for the soul of the deceased; he himself was present at it, and took an attestation in writing of them, that they had said it. Having done this, he ordered all the goods of his kinsman to be arrested; alleging that the end of the testament being obtained, the goods ought to return to their natural channel, that is to say, to the heir at law;

that he could prove that his relation was either in paradise or in hell, and that in either of these places he stood in need of no masses. The case was brought to the bar, and pleaded with great heat on both sides, the Jesuits being plaintiffs, and the merchant the defendant. But alas! the case was to be determined by an ecclesiastical court, where all the judges were parties, who (had they done right) would have condemned what they themselves do every day. So the suit was carried in favour of the Jesuits, under pretence, forsooth, that the church must always be favoured. However, it is evident that right and reason were on the merchant's side, and that he could not be condemned without injustice. But I return to our confraternities.

There is not a town in Italy, how small and inconsiderable soever, which has not a confraternity for the souls of purgatory, and at the least a score of priests, who live upon it very plentifully. Besides the money they receive for their masses, which never fails them, they have a sort of people who carry boxes through the streets, from house to house, begging of all those they meet with, with a great deal of importunity, some money for the souls in purgatory; which money the priests afterwards share amongst themselves. In many places of Italy, especially in the great cities, in order to having a fixed and settled income, they let to farm this purgatory money to some layman or other, as I have seen at Milan, at that famous confraternity of the Souls in Purgatory, established in the church of *St. John de Casa Rotta*. The farmer here pays four thousand crowns every year to the priests of that church, and makes his profit of the rest. He maintains for this end forty box-carriers, who are clothed in white, and wear upon their short white cloaks the arms of the confraternity, to distinguish them. They have each

of them a shilling a day allowed them, and their business is to run through all the streets of the city, and beg money for the souls in purgatory. These box-carriers are picked men, very cunning and skilful at their trade of begging. Sometimes they are so importunate and impertinent, that they follow a man the length of two or three streets without quitting him, to force him by their importunity to give them something. Neither is it without danger to give them any rude or churlish answer; for in that case they have the malice to tell you to your face, "that they see well enough you have no consideration for the souls in purgatery." And should you continue to revile them, might probably get you recommended to the Inquisition, to learn more manners. The farmer of the Souls in Purgatory has the keys of all these boxes, and they are bound once or twice a week to bring them in to him. When at any time they bring them full and well lined, he gives them something over and above their ordinary pay, to encourage them to perform the quest with so much the more application and dexterity. He takes care to place some of his boxes in all inns, ordinaries, taverns, victualling-houses, and other public places. Those who have travelled in Italy know, that the host does commonly, at the end of every meal, bring in his box for the souls in purgatory, and desire his guests to put in their charity. At the time of harvest and vintage, the farmer sends some of his emissaries into the fields, to carry on the quest there for the said souls. They have great waggons with them, and beg some portion of what is gathered, in corn, wine, wood, rice, hemp, and even to the very eggs and hens; which done, they either spend what they have got themselves, or else sell it and turn it to money.

This is, Sir, some part of what I have observed concerning the use that is made of the doctrine of purgatory in Italy. I might produce many instances of every different point I have treated of in my letters; but commonly I allege one only, and very rarely two; and indeed never but when some particular circumstance, which deserves one's notice, does oblige me to it. I shall only add a word or two concerning their pictures of purgatory, before I conclude this letter.

There is never a church or chapel in Italy which has not some large picture in it, representing purgatory. The souls that are there are painted in the resemblance of naked young men and women, with some flames surrounding them; these flames indeed are harmless enough, because they burn not; but I fear those infamous naked figures kindle many flames in the hearts of many spectators.

They publicly expose these pictures on their altars, and the people have them before their eyes whilst they hear mass.—I know what they allege, "this is done to impress these great truths of Christianity on the imagination;" as if Christians were only to be led by their imaginations, and not by their reason in all things, and at the same time spare nothing to fortify his imagination. Whereas the Protestants do quite the contrary, they disregard and neglect material things that so vigorously affect the senses, that they may worship God in spirit and in truth, and render to him a reasonable service.

They practise one thing in Italy which is indeed very horrible. When a poor criminal is led to punishment, he has always two priests by his side, who hold a picture of purgatory before his eyes; they even go up the ladder or scaffold with him, still holding the picture before him till exe-

cution be done, and talk to him of nothing else. Is not this indeed to double the terror and fright of these poor wretches. who are but too much terrified already with the death they see prepared for them? the same thing they practise towards those that lie dying. They place a picture of purgatory at the feet of their bed, between two lighted wax candles, to make it appear with more lustre, and the patient is exhorted to keep his eyes upon it. Some are fain to beseech them to speak of the goodness and mercy of God, because they are already sufficiently terrified with his justice. But for the most part they do but knock at a dead man's door; for the priests are so wedded to their songs of purgatory, that if they chance to make a small digression, they presently fall again into their old track. For my part, I am of opinion that after we have spoken to a sick person of the justice of God, of punishing of sin in the other world by the eternal pains of hell, to the end of making him seriously examine his own conscience, it is very fitting afterwards to lay before him the great mercy of God, to raise his hopes, and inflame his charity. We fear God, because he is just to punish; but we love him, because he is kind to pardon; and surely, it is better that the last moments of a Christian's life should be spent in loving God, than in the fears and terrors of his judgments. This is what has cast many into those terrors which wanted little of downright despair. But alas! it is but too evident that the doctrine of purgatory was never contrived so much for the comfort of dying persons, as for the profit of the living, I mean of those lazy priests, who think of nothing but of pleasing themselves, and to enjoy ease and plenty in this world.

I should now come to speak something of the principal means they make use of, to confirm and

maintain their doctrine of purgatory, which is, to preach it up with an incomparable zeal and earnestness. I call to mind also, that I promised you at the beginning of this letter to give you some account of their manner of preaching in Italy; but as I perceive it to be long enough already, and that this subject cannot be dispatched in a few words, I shall reserve it for the next occasion I shall have of writing to you; in the mean time, Sir, I beseech you to believe, that I shall continue all my life,

Yours, &c

LETTER VI.

Abuse of Preaching.—Specimen of a Dominican Sermon.—Capuchin Preaching—Preachers of the Public laces—Children Preachers—Red Caps, or Missionaries—Easter-day Sermons—Blessing of Easter Eggs—Grate Preachers, or Preachers to Nuns, &c.

YOU know, Sir, that which supports the Church of God, and is, (as it were) the life and soul of it, are the Sacraments and the Word of God; wherefore it is of the highest consequence, that both of these be faithfully and decently administered; and I shall always take the due and faithful dispensation thereof for a sure mark of the true church. This motive engaged me, whilst I was at Rome, particularly to inspect the practices of the Church of Rome; in reference to both these, I supposed I could not meet with any place more favorable to this my design, than this great city, which boasts herself, (if we will believe her) not only to contain within her precinct, the principal and mother church of the whole world; but over and above, doth attribute to herself, (though it be hard to say upon what good ground) the name of HOLY *Roma Sancta.* As for what concerns the administration of the sacraments, I cannot deny, but the same is performed there both very orderly and solemnly, and indeed, with an overplus of ceremonies, even to superstition. Here I should give you an account of those ceremonies which are observed at the consecration of priests, the celebrating of the eucharist, and of the pompous preparations that are made against Easter, the week before, called the Holy Week; which by their

splendor and magnificence, draw an infinite number of strangers to Rome, towards the end of Lent, to be spectators thereof. It is a common saying, that he who would pass his time most agreeably in Italy, must be at Venice at Shrovetide and Ascension day; the Octave of the Holy Sacrament at Bononia, and the Holy Week at Rome.

Here also, I should have occasion to relate to you an infinite number of fopperies, that are practised here on certain feasts in the year, as at Christmas, Ascension, and Pentecost; but because this would take up a great deal of time, I shall pass them by in silence at present, to enlarge myself on a more considerable subject, wherewith my intent is to entertain you particularly at this time, which is, their way and manner of preaching. As much as there is of superstition and excess in the pompous administration of the Sacraments, so great a deficiency, negligence, and unfaithfulness do we meet with in the dispen sation of the word. During the space of seven years that I was in Italy, in all the cities where I have been at the times of Advent and Shrovetide, I have heard a vast number of sermons; but I have never seen or known any curate, or secular priests, to preach, except once a canon at St. John of *Lateran*, and a cardinal on Easter-day, in the cathedral church of Milan. So that in case the Word of God be corrupted and abused, as indeed it is very considerably every day, we cannot charge the secular priests of Italy therewith, who do not preach at all, or who indeed, are (for the most part) so ignorant, that they cannot if they would; but the fault is wholly to be laid at the door of the monks, and other religious, who have in a manner, wholly engrossed the performance thereof. Methinks it is enough said, when I tell you, that the true pastors, who are the curates,

take no pains to feed their own flock, but recommend that care to strangers, I mean to monks, who are more solicitous to satisfy their own interest and vain glory, than to procure the salvation of souls. Yea, the monks have so absolutely possessed themselves of this ministry, that they will not suffer a secular priest to preach in his own church; and if any of them should undertake so to do, and they should find that they could not supplant him, they would maliciously employ all manner of means to blacken and misrepresent him in the eyes of the people, and rob him of his credit and reputation.

True it is, that on the other hand, the curates being generally lovers of ease and idleness, make no great endeavours to reclaim their right to the pulpit: they declare openly, that it is the business of the monks to preach, forasmuch as not being engaged in the business and trouble of the world, they have leisure enough in their monasteries to study and con their sermons; but that as for them, being wholly employed in the administration of sacraments, in hearing of confessions, and assisting at funerals, they have no spare time to turn their thoughts that way. So that we seldom meet with any quarrels on this occasion between them and the monks.

Whilst I was at Rome, I often went to the Minerva to hear sermons: they are the father Dominicans who preach here, who are also called *The Preaching Brothers;* because in the sharing and division of the gifts and graces of God, the monks have made amongst themselves, these have boldly appropriated to themselves the gift of preaching. But we find that this is nothing but an arrogant usurpation of theirs, without the consent of the Holy Spirit; for I have scarcely found any monks more unsuccessful in this ministry than themselves. God will never permit the pride of

men to dispose of those gifts which belong to Him alone. The Jesuits have arrogated to themselves the gifts of tongues, and of informing youth; and yet experience shews, that they are indeed very ignorant and unskilful in both these; and that the scholars who have studied in the universities under other masters, are incomparably better grounded in learning, than theirs are. The monks of St. Bennet have appropriated to themselves the character of retirement and silence, and yet we find no people more gadding up and down in cities and country, than they.

But to return to my discourse; it was one of these old Dominican, or preaching brothers that preached at the Minerva; but he did it in so unworthy and indecent a manner, that I wonder how I could resolve to go and hear him more than once. All that was attractive in him was, that notwithstanding he was very old, yet he was extremely comical, and an egregious buffoon; so that he made his auditors laugh with open throats: he walked in his pulpit (for in Italy they have them very long and wide;) he thumped the pulpit with his hands and feet; he rolled his eyes in his head, and put himself in an hundred ridiculous postures.

I shall give you here a small scantling of one of his sermons, which I still remember, that by the pattern ye may judge of the whole piece. He had a mind it seems, to make a moral application of the history set down in the twenty-first chapter of the book of Genesis, where Abraham turned his maid Hagar out of doors. He begins thus, "Sirs, come follow me, and take a walk with me in the holy Scripture," then fetching three steps in the pulpit, having one of his arms a kimbow, he stopt short at the fourth, and as a man who in a horrid desert saw some body at a great distance, he stood still a good while without

speaking a word, and very attentively fixing his eyes till the near approach of the object, he began to say, "What is that I see there? sure it is a woman," and keeping silence again a good while, he said, "O God! if I be not much mistaken, it is Hagar, Abraham's servant: ah, sure enough it is the very same. God save you Hagar; Prithee tell me what is thy business here to this lonesome desert, which is so dismal and frightful to nature?" Then making, as if he viewed her from head to foot, "I perceive one thing already, (said he) that she has not robbed her master, as many servants do now a-days; for she is in a very pitiful state. Tell me, Hagar, why is it then you have left your master?" Here making Hagar speak in a most afflicted and sorrowful manner, and as it were all in tears, "That it was because of her mistress's jealousy," he answered laughing, "A very fine reason believe me; what, was this all? hum! this is very pleasant; Madam Sarah turns away her servant, because she is jealous of her. Come Hagar, come along with me; I will at this instant go and speak to thy master about it." And then taking seven or eight turns in the pulpit, muttering all the while to himself; "Sarah turns away her servant, because she is jealous of her; a staunch reason indeed!" and then stopped, striking two great thumps against the pulpit, he said, "Who is there? Pray tell Abraham I would speak with him;" and soon after making a very low bow, as if he had seen Abraham, he said to him, "Abraham, pray tell me for what reason you have turned away your servant Hagar? she tells me it is because your wife is jealous of her:" then personating Abraham, Abraham answered him, "If I have turned away my servant, I have had an order from God for it, and therefore do not think myself bound to give you any further

reason for it. Though indeed Hagar has not told you all; It was not only upon the account of jealousy she was turned out of doors, but because she has a little boy of her own, that is very naughty, she beats him that I had by my wife; they are continually wrangling together; they pull one another by the hair; they cry, and make an intolerable noise in the house. My wife has several times spoken friendly to her servant about it, but Hagar is become too bold and impertinent, she gives saucy answers, and has too much tongue: for these reasons therefore and to have quiet in mine house, I have been fain to turn her out of doors!" Here the old father Dominican, rolling his eyes in his head, and wrinkling his brow, as one that was very angry with Hagar. "Hagar (said he) I find now, that thou didst not tell me the cream of the jest: thou art just like the servants of Rome, when they are turned out of service it is never any of their faults, it is because their mistresses are of an intolerable difficult temper; they are exceedingly humoursome; they are very jealous, and it is impossible to live with them: but by what I can perceive, it was because you began to play the mistress, and because there was a continual disturbance in the house on your account. I know well enough, that jealousy could not be a sufficient reason for sending a good servant packing; for otherwise our Roman dames, who are extremely jealous, would never be able to keep any: but there must be this beside in the case, that this jealousy causeth noise and disturbance in the house between the husband and his wife, or between the children; and then I am clearly of Abraham's opinion, the servant must turn out—*Ejice ancillam et filium ejus.*"

The father, after he had very dexterously played the buffoon on this history of the Bible, past on to another, which he handled in the same comical

manner, making all his hearers to burst out into a loud laughter; and, after all, fell upon the devotion common to their order, which is the rosary; for they bring in this by the head and shoulders upon all occasions, let their subjects be what they please. This was his constant mode of preaching, and the church was always full of people.

The Italians are extremely in love with sermons that make them laugh, which is the reason that the most part of the preachers apply themselves to a comical and drolling style. The Jesuits have another way of preaching, which I may call a poetical style; for they being persons who have spent their young years in teaching human learning in the colleges, commonly quote a vast number of passages drawn from profane authors and poets; as from Cicero, Virgil, Horace, Martial, &c., yea, I have heard some of them that have quoted *Terence's Comedies*, and *Ovid de Arte Amandi;* but they very seldom are heard citing the fathers, and yet more seldom the Holy Scripture. The great converse they have with persons of quality, makes their words and expressions to be choice; their discourse neat and refined, though substance and solidity be for the most part wanting in them; their gesture is very proper, and their declaration or elocution, not amiss. For to gain the more credit to their order, which is of late standing, and yet so powerful, they very frequently quote the book of the exercises of their founder St. Ignatius; which, after all, is but a very poor book, and (as it is said) none of his own neither, having stolen it when he was a convert brother in the abbey of the Benedictines of Montserra.

The Capuchins have another way of preaching, and their stile is stoical, emphatical, and thundering. They commonly make choice of very

terrible subjects, as Death, the Last Judgment, Purgatory, and Hell. They fill the air with exclamations, thump the pulpit with their hands and feet; they lay hold of their great beards, and roar with such a tone as terrifies all men, yea, and the dogs too; for I have observed, that when a Capuchin preaches, all the dogs run out of the church. In a word, almost all the religious have a different way of preaching, and different divines too, whom they follow, whose opinions are frequently opposite to one another. The Cordeliers have their Scotus and St. Bonaventura; the Dominicans, St. Thomas, the Jesuits their Suarez, and so of the rest.

As for the order observed as to partition of their sermon, it is the same throughout all Italy. They all begin their sermons with the angelical salutation, *Ave Maria;* and not with the invocation of our heavenly Father, in praying, Our Father, &c., or by calling upon the Holy Ghost, which yet are the most proper, or rather the only necessary for this purpose. But indeed, the doctrine they preach, is so extremely corrupt and wrested, that it is no wonder to find their introductions tainted with the same infection. God, by this very thing manifesting to us, that what they preach is not the pure word of God, by permitting them to preface their human inventions with the invocation of a creature. After their address to the Virgin, they pronounce their text, which is commonly a place of scripture, or sometimes a part of a prayer of their church, or some entrance of the mass. They cite the texts of scripture only by halves, and in an abstract and interrupted sense, without declaring what goes before, or what follows after; which yet they ought to do, to render the sense perfect. After this, they proceed to their proposition, and then continue their discourse all of a piece, without any divisions or

subdivisions at all. They divide their sermon indeed into two parts; but the second is nothing else but a heap of examples, histories, and tales made at pleasure, to divert their auditors. In the interval between the first and second part, they gather the alms into the church for the poor. There are men appointed for this purpose, who have bags fastened to the end of long staves, with little bells at the bottom of them, and they pass by all the ranks and seats of the hearers, to receive their charity. The preacher, in the mean time, whilst these bags or purses are marching about, doth, with an incomparable zeal, exhort them to give freely. I never in my life saw people more inflamed with charity for their neighbour, than they are in the pulpit. You would say, they are the very fathers of the poor; herein I cannot but do them the justice to own, that our Protestant ministers are not so good advocates for the necessitous members of Jesus Christ, and do not take the cause of the poor to heart with so much heat and zeal, as these men do. However, Sir, I would have you know, that when I praise your Italian monks, it is not their person I praise, but their action, or rather the external appearance of their action; for if we cut this fair apple in two, we shall find the worm there, which makes it all rotten and corrupt within. To make short, my meaning is, that the motive that prompts them so seriously and zealously to recommend the poor to their auditors, is a piece of self interest; for the one half of the alms that are gathered in the church, as well as at the church door, during the sermon, belongs to the father preacher, otherwise it were impossible to induce those hard-hearted and pitiless monks, those hearts of brass and marble, who are so signally qualified with insensibleness and cruelty; I say, it would be impossible to induce them to any sentiments of

mercy and compassion for the miseries of their neighbour, if laymen had not found out a way to join the interest of the preachers with that of the poor, and to make but one of them. This, Sir, is the great spring that moves the engine, and makes the monks to study such importunate motives and reasons, to draw money from their hearers, purses. Yea, there be some of them, who are so extremely malapert and insolent, that I am astonished they do not pull them out of the pulpit.

I went one day in Lent to hear one of the sermons at the church of St. Andrew of the Valley at Rome; it was a Father Franciscan that then preached there; his sermon was concerning predestination, and after he had declared, that the number of those that were predestinate, was not so small as some did imagine; I speak now (said he) of Catholics, for as for all infidels, who do not believe in Jesus Christ, as well as all heretics, as the Lutherans, Calvinists, Zuinglians, &c. our mother (the holy Church Catholic, apostolic, and Roman) teaches us, that they are undoubtedly damned, and we ought to believe accordingly. Afterwards, making a long enumeration of all those he firmly believed would certainly be saved, he amongst the rest, mentioned all those who were enrolled in the confraternity of St. Francis his rope, which peculiarly belongs to those of his order; because, (said he) it is impossible, according to the bulls we have concerning it from the Popes, that any such should die in any mortal sin. He very frankly allowed the same grace also to all those who wore the habit of his order, and so very handsomely justled in himself into the number of the elect. Finally, putting a question to himself, whether there were not some visible mark upon earth, by which one might distinguish the elect from the reprobate? he answered him-

self, " Yes, that certainly there were such signs." Amongst other signs he reckoned up, I remember this was one, to love music, and the sound of instruments; but that the principal sign of all was to give alms. This indeed was the point he would be at, and very dexterously he took occasion from thence, to exhort all his auditory, to expose that day to the eyes of all men, the undoubted tokens of their predestination, by their liberal putting into the purses; and that for his part, he would take exact notice from his station on high, of all those who gave this evidence of their election, that so he might know who were reprobate, and who were predestinate amongst them. Accordingly he sets himself down in his pulpit, and was silent; and staring with his great eyes that way they carried the bags, having perceived all the first rank had shewed themselves very liberal: " This is well," said he, " I find that here is one rank already of my auditors that are predestinate." And the second and third having followed the same example; " In very truth," said he, " I believe, that my whole auditory will prove to be of the number of the elect. This is an extraordinary comfort to me, that I have preached here this lent, and I render thanks to God for it; because it is a sign that sinners are converted." By this means the father procured a very liberal collection. I observed all this while, that he put many of his auditors into great trouble and confusion, especially some women, who probably had no money about them; they blushed exceedingly, and to avoid the confusion of being accounted reprobates, they reached forth their hands to the bags, ac if they had put in something. I myself heard a handy-crafts-man saying to one of his acquaintance, " That monk there (with his signs of predestination) made me, sore against my will, put a crown

into the bag, because I had no other small money about me; for if I had given nothing, it would have spoiled my reputation; they would have taken me for a damned wretch, which would have been enough to have frightened all customers from my shop."

The monk ravished to see so many elect in his auditory, very joyfully fell to the second part of his discourse, and being put into an extreme good humour by their liberality, he played the buffoon to admiration. After he had told them many little pleasant stories, he began his second quest for the souls in purgatory. He made use of the same motive, with which he had sped so well before. He represented to them, that it was not enough to have shewed their charity to the living, but that it was necessary for the completing of the evidence of their predestination, to extend it also to those that are dead; that is, to the members of the suffering church; for that is the title they give to purgatory. The money of this quest goes to the priests or monks to whom the church belongs where the sermon is preached; and to encourage the preacher to do it more effectually, they allow him the fourth part of the collection. This is that which makes them so zealous to exhort the people from their pulpits, to a liberal contribution. There are some who are so far transported with zeal for these suffering souls, that not content to have made one quest in general on this subject, they back the same with two others. The second is with an intention to relieve some relation or friend, that any of the auditors are more particularly obliged to assist; and the third for that soul in purgatory, which is the most neglected as to matter of suffrages, and who hath neither relations nor friends to pray to God for her. Thus it is, that these foolish and rash men, imprudently exalt their own mercy and com-

passion above that of God himself; implying, that if their charity did not extend itself to these wretched souls, destitute of all help and assistance, as they say, God would be pitiless and cruel enough, to let them suffer a vast number of years, yea, even to the day of judgment, without shewing any mercy to them.

I heard a father Carmelite in the parish of St. Sophia in Venice, who having made a sign with his hand, to oblige his auditory to be silent, and listening attentively with his ear, as if he had heard something, he at length asked them, whether they did not hear a kind of indistinct noise, as of many voices at a distance? Afterwards, lending his ear a second time, he told them, that he heard the souls of purgatory calling upon them, not to spare their charities, but to relieve them with a liberal contribution; corrupting to this purpose that passage of the Revelations, *Audivi sub altare animus interfectorum clamantium, vindica sanguinem nostrum, Deus noster;*—I heard under the altar the souls of those that were slain; crying, "Avenge our blood, O God." For he made bold to change most of the words, to accommodate them to this purpose; saying, *Audio sub altare animas defunctorum clamantium, refrigerate sanguinem nostrum Fratres nostri;*—I heard under the altar the souls in purgatory, that cry, "Refresh and cool our blood our dear brethren." I took this action of the preacher for an excellent figure of rhetoric which is called *fictio;* but I am sure that many there did not take it in my sense, but did really believe that the preacher had indeed heard the souls in purgatory crying under the high altar; a sure sign of which was, that many rose up from their seats to look that way. The sermon being ended, the preacher comes down out of the pulpit, and is led into the sextry, whither the purses are brought, and there

they are opened in his presence, and his share or dividend counted out to him; the preachers herein resembling fowls of prey, or hunting dogs, to whom always a portion is given of the prey they have taken.

In those parts of Italy that border upon Germany and France, the people do not suffer the priests and monks to lead them by the nose, so much as the inhabitants of the provinces that are nearer to Rome. True it is, the priests are not wanting to use their utmost endeavours to bring their purgatory into request; but the laymen look upon them as no better than mountebanks for their pains, who spare no lies to persuade the people to buy their drugs.

The second part of their sermon, as is already mentioned, is made up of idle tales and drollery; which is the reason why many persons, who take no delight in these jests and fooleries, and probably also, for fear they should be forced against their wills, by the impudence of the preacher, to put money into the purses, go out of the church towards the end of the first part. This first part contains the body and substance of their discourse; and they who print their *quadragesimals* and their advent sermons, that they may not disparage themselves, never print the second part of them; but make a shift to divide their first part, and make two of it.

The buffoons, or comical preachers, are the most followed by the common people; but those that preach by curious thoughts are the most esteemed; and those who are called *Dotti*, or *Virtuosi*, do generally frequent them. This way of preaching by curious thoughts consists chiefly in never representing things in their natural sense. If they alledge a text of Scipture, it is in a sense that is forced, subtle, curious, and far-fetched, which is not the meaning of the Scripture; and a

preacher who should stop at the literal and natural sense, would be looked upon no better than a simpleton, ignoramus, and idiot; and except he had something of a comical air with him, would be very slenderly provided with auditors. I have made it my observation, that they commonly take no place of Scripture in the literal sense beside the sacramental words, *hoc est corpus meum*,—this is my body; for here they obstinately keep to the letter. And yet I once heard a father Minim, in Trinity Church, on the hill at Rome, who interpreted the whole history of the institution of the Lord's supper in another sense, applying it wholly to the doctrine of alms. "Our Lord Jesus Christ (said he) the more engagingly to recommend to us the care of the poor, would have the last action he ever did here on earth should be an act of charity; to this purpose, when he had nothing more to dispose of, save one poor morsel of bread he had in his hands, he brake it and gave it to his disciples." This thought of his was found very quaint and curious; though in the mean time it is very evident that this is not the true and natural sense of the holy history; for Jesus Christ in this action did not in the least pretend to give alms, but to institute a sacrament that might serve for the sustenance and spiritual comfort of our souls. However, the monk was extraordinarily applauded for this curious thought, and he was not wanting to make good use of it at his quest. And to the end that they may be more fruitful and copious in these fine thoughts, the monks ordinarily retire and take their walks in pleasant places, as in gardens and woods, there to meditate their sermons. Others again betake themselves to dark and subterranean places, there to contemplate without disturbance. Some of them drink good wine, and that in great quantity too, because (according to the common proverb) *vinum acuit ingenium*,

—wine excites invention; and lastly, others follow their particular humours.

The superiors of religious houses suffer their preaching monks to do what they please, and go where they will, to favour their invention, or, (as they term it,) their curious thoughts. It is this liberty and indulgence that makes so many monks in Italy apply themselves to preaching, because, being once engaged in this way, they are exempted from all the observances their rule obliges them to.

The way of setting forth these their fine thoughts in the pulpit is this:—as soon as they have uttered any thing that is neat and curious, to make it appear not to want solidity, they (in order to back it) endeavour to find out some texts of Scripture that seem to favour it, and to which, for the most part, they give as forced a turn as to that which is the basis and ground of their neat thought. They commonly quote nothing but ends and scraps of verses, without telling what goes before, or what follows, and seldom or never cite the books from whence they are taken. They content themselves with saying, "as it is written;" or, "according to the oracle of the Holy Spirit;" or, "as it is set down in the sacred text," and then quote the place they intend; but it is impossible to know whether what they alledge be faithfully reported by them or no. Thus it is an easy thing for these corrupters of the Holy Writ (that they may authorise their neat thoughts and high sublimations of wit) to seduce poor people who never read the Scripiture, and to whom the reading of it is not so much as permitted. After they have thus endeavoured to back their curious thought with Scripture, they then endeavour further to strengthen it by the authority of the Fathers. They reckon amongst the Fathers not only the ancient doctors of the Church, as St. Chrysostom,

St. Ambrose, St. Jerome, and St. Austin, &c. but also their more modern doctors, as St. Thomas Aquinas, Cardinal Belarmin, &c. insomuch as at this rate they have a very large and wide field to go a pickeering in; and as it is an ordinary saying, "that good wits jump," this eggregiously flatters their pride, to make out to the people, that those great understandings of ancient times do accord so well with theirs. Some have the sottish vanity to say in the pulpit, "St. Austin, or St. Ambrose had the same thought with me when he said," &c. They very seldom quote the books and chapters from whence they have their authorities, and they content themselves with saying in general, "as saith St. Austin,—as St. Ambrose affirms." But experience does evidence it beyond dispute, that they cite a vast number of authorities falsely, or else do so extremely mangle and corrupt them, that if we should go look for them in the original, from whence they pretend to have drawn them, it would be a very hard matter to know them.

I once heard a Benedictine monk in the church of St. Praxed at Rome, who having made an objection to himself, why amongst so many persons who have recourse to the blessed Virgin in their needs, so few are relieved by her? An event indeed which seems directly opposed to the belief of the Church of Rome, viz. that all those who address themselves with confidence to the blessed Virgin, are infallibly assisted by her. He answered this objection by saying, "that those who failed of her aid, were such as did not lift up their hearts to her. They indeed (said he) do often enough lift up their eyes, their hands, and their voice to Mary; but their hearts all the while are grovelling on the earth, and they never lift them up towards her. To this pupose he quoted St. Jerome, *si volumus exaudiri à Mara, erigamus*

corda nostra ad Mariam;—if we would have Mary hear us, we must lift up our hearts to Mary. I had read St. Jerome before, and I have read him over since, having always this passage of the Benedictine well impressed on my memory, but I could never find it there; and I am well assured that no one will be able to find it there after me. But the mystery of it was, that this passage was very proper to back and confirm the fine thoughts of the monk.

We need not wonder to find the Roman Catholics boast of having the Fathers on their side; for if at any time they are not so, they soon make them come over to them by force, and draw them in (as we say) by the head and shoulders. In this case they imitate another Italian monk, who not being able to make a passage of St. Chrysostom favour a fine thought that had just come into his head, he began to be in a passion; and having changed two or three words in the text, which did in a manner spoil the whole sense of it, he said in bad Latin, but very expressive of what he would be at,—*faciam te bene venire*, and thus forced the text to comply with his foolish imaginations. By this means it is that these miserable monks make those venerable ancient Fathers to assert that which they never thought of, and can never be found in their writings; and all this is only to feed their vain-glorious humour, and to obtrude their own dreams for authentic truths, owned and believed by the purest times of Christendom.

Moreover, to set forth these their curious thoughts with the greater lustre, they do adorn them with many quaint figures of rhetoric; all their discourse being made up of metaphors, allusions, and holy allegories, with a taking elocution, and curious select words; and all of them *antitheta*, or opposed to one another, wherein

the Italian language is happy beyond others. See here the fair and glittering cup of gold, wherein the whore mingles her poison, lies, and errors, to intoxicate the souls of men. This is the wide gate by which so many extravagant and dangerous opinions are entered into the Church of Rome. You may easily judge, by the nature of the pasture, of the condition the flock is in; and by the qualifications of their new pastors, I mean the monks, the wretched state of the sheepfold committed to their charge. These are those pastors who share the wool, and feed on the fattest of the flock; but have little or no concern for the salvation of their souls, so that they may but glut and satisfy their covetousness and ambition.

Loredano, a noble Venetian, so famous in Italy for his witty and curious compositions, writing to Almoro Grimani at Verona, to recommend to him a preacher of his acquaintance, expressed himself in his letter to him in these words:—"The father Jerom Olivi goes to Verona to make a pompous show of his eloquence during lent." He saith not that this monk goes to preach the gospel, or to strive to gain souls to Jesus Christ; but says, "that he goes to make a shew of his eloquence;" in which words he very fully expresses the motive that puts these monks upon preaching.

I have no words, Sir, to express to you the cabals, intrigues, solicitations, and intercessions that are made to get into the best pulpits; that is to say, those where the most money or honour is to be got. They interpose the favour of grandees and princes, to assure themselves of them, and that four or five years before they become vacant. There are some of these pulpits that are worth to the preacher, for an advent or lent, four five, and six hundred crowns; yea, some of them a thousand or more, without reckoning the share

of the alms given to the poor. As for those, from whence there is no great profit to be expected, the press is not so great; and as for the poor parishes in the country where nothing at all is to be had, there is not a monk to be found, that will bestow so much as one sermon upon them.

They have ordinarily no preaching in Italy, save only during advent and lent: on all other feasts and Sundays of the year they have no sermons at the parishes; and instead thereof they only sing an high mass in music; but the word of God is not preached at all in them. Yet in some convents of monks they have sermons in the afternoon; but these are sermons peculiar to the order of which the monks are, and always on the same subject. The Dominicans preach eternally on the rosary; the Carmelites on the scapulary; the Franciscans on the rope of St. Francis; and the Socolanti have for their subject St. Anthony of Padua. True it is, these matters are of themselves very dry and barren, and I am astonished how they can continually make them yield something to talk of. One great help indeed they have, which is, that the greatest part of their sermons is made up of a relation of miracles, which a preacher of good invention may almost with as much ease coin as utter.

The Jesuits also have erected in their houses congregations, which they denominate from the blessed Virgin, where they preach all Sundays and holidays. And to the end that they may have all, and draw to them all sorts of people, they make a distinction of persons; they have one congregation for artizans and handycraft-men, another for scholars, a third for merchants, and a fourth for gentlemen and noblemen. They also have set days in which they preach in their churches, to prepare the people to die well. They have very happily possessed themselves of

this post, for it is exceeding gainful and profitable to them. Upon this score it is that they are sent for to exhort the sick, and such as lie at the point of death; which is the most proper time, and the fairest occasion for them to get themselves put into their last wills.

There is yet another sort of preachers in Italy, which I never saw in any other parts where the Popish religion is professed. These preachers are called, "Preachers of the Place." To give you a more distinct idea hereof, you must know, Sir, that in the great cities of Italy, towards evening, when the great heat of the day is past, the Italians (of what rank or quality soever they be,) go and take a walk in the Piazza. Here it is they give audience, and discourse about their business. If any have a mind to meet a person about that time, the first thing they do is to go and look for him at the *Place*. Here you are sure always to meet with a great number of ballad singers, jugglers, mountebanks, fortune-tellers, and other such like, who find their greatest profit amongst the greatest crowds. And the people do not fail to get about them, for their diversion and recreation; and amongst these you meet with more priests and monks than laymen; for after they have discharged themselves of their masses in the morning, there are none more idle than they all the rest of the day. No sooner are the mountebanks got up to their stage, but at the same time, (by what motive or zeal I know not,) a monk, with a great crucifix carried before him, with a little bell they ring to give notice of his coming, mounts a portable pulpit, prepared for him in one of the corners of the Place, opposite to the theatre of the rope-dancers, and there begins to preach, a multitude of people running from all parts to hear him.

When I first saw this, I was extremely edified to see such crowds of people leave the actors and rope-dancers, to hear a sermon; but drawing near myself to hear the discourse, I found that these preachers were better qualified to make the people laugh by their pleasant discourse and mimical gesture, than the merry-andrews of the stage. The mountebanks play the fool on their stages; and they, the buffoons and drolls in their pulpits. Whilst those use their utmost effort to sell their drugs, these make a quest in the place, which goes by the name of "being for the Poor," whom they recommend with great zeal and earnestness to their hearers, though indeed all the money they gather comes into their own pockets. I chanced once to be in the company of some monks who impudently did aver, that these sermons in the piazzas were a manifest proof of the truth of the religion of Rome against the heretics, because in them there was a visible accomplishment of the oracle of the Holy Ghost, which we find in the first chapter of Proverbs, where it is said, "That wisdom cries in the public places;" and that this was only to be found amongst the Roman Catholics, where wisdom, that is, the word of God, made itself to be heard in public, by means of these Preachers of the Places.

The Roman Catholics are at a loss, whither to betake themselves for visible signs of the truth of their church. They produce some others every whit as pitiful as that now mentioned, amongst which they reckon a certain custom introduced into Italy, to make little children to preach publicly in their churches, from Christmas till Twelfth-tide. They take pretty children of about three or four years of age, and they make them get by heart some short sermons on the birth of our Saviour, which may last about a quarter of an hour; they spend much time to exercise them in

the utterance of them with a good grace, and on Christmas-day they preach them before the mangers that are prepared in all churches at that time. These little children observe all the ceremonies of preachers; they begin with the Ave Maria, then proceed to a short introduction, and afterwards to a division. As soon as they have made an end of the first part they make a quest, and all their auditors give them something. This done, they preach for the souls in purgatory. No sooner has one of them made an end of his sermon but another takes his place, and begins, and thus they continue till twelfth-tide. They begin early in the morning, and do not make an end till far in the night. The money they get at their quests serves them afterwards to make a collation with, and to buy them sweetmeats and other junkets. Thus it is they educate, and accustom these young lions betimes to the prey, to the end (when they are grown up to be great preachers,) they may be expert in devouring the alms, which are given to the poor only.

Now all this petty intrigue is produced by the Italians, as a mark, forsooth, of the truth of their religion, applying it to that verse of the Psalmist, "Thou hast (according to their explication of it) perfected the work of preaching out of the mouth of infants." They say that this is no where to be found, save only in their church. This gives me an occasion to speak to you of that signal mark of their church of which they boast so much, and which, with so much vehemence, they object to the Protestants, viz. the mission of their evangelical preachers, whom they send into foreign countries, and of which number are all those wretched Jesuits that come to England, and of whom I doubt not but there are great numbers still in the kingdom. This I can assure you, that should the Jesuits of Italy, and other countries of the Ro-

man communion, send thither their missionaries proportionably to the money that is given them for this purpose, all the fathers of the order would not be sufficient to supply their places. It is impossible to imagine the immense sums that are given them upon this account. This is their great pretence, in the frequent visits they make to the palaces of the great ones, as well as to the houses of widows and rich men, to induce them to contribute to so holy a work. And after all, they content themselves with sending only a certain number of their Jesuits, whom they provide for, employing the rest of the money in building those stately houses, or rather those sumptuous palaces for themselves, as they do; (for they will not have them called monasteries or convents,) and with the same money they proportionally increase the rents and incomes thereof. A poor Capuchin, who goes about begging an alms, is very well content if he gets but wherewithal to fill his hungry belly; but the pretext of the Jesuit is far more specious, it is for the conversion of souls, and one must open wide their purse-strings to them, *ad majorem Dei gloriam*,—for the greater glory of God.

One thing there is remarkable, which is, that we do not find the Jesuits so zealous to go to other Protestant countries, as they are to come to England; for we meet with but very few of them in Switzerland or Germany; the reason is, because England is furnished with a charm that is irresistable for them; it is a country well stored with money, and could they but once wriggle in themselves to be the directors and confessors of the English ladies, it would be a very pleasing employment for them. Besides, it is well known, what kind of a life they lead here, and that it is nothing less than a penitential way of living, as they would make others believe. Wherefore, I

cannot see how their mission can be an infallible mark of the truth of the Roman religion, as the Papists pretend; but sure I am, that this mark, (if there must be any at this time) may with great justice be attributed to those zealous Protestant ministers, who, having already suffered imprisonment and banishment for the defence of the Gospel, are privately returned to France, in the greatest heat of the persecution, and betaken themselves to those provinces where they were altogether unknown, to strengthen and encourage their brethren to persevere in the profession of the truth, and to endeavour to raise up those again, who by their frailty had renounced it. Here, to be sure, were no temporal advantages for them to hope for; and they could easily be assured, that in case they were taken in the fact, the would be sent to the gallies, or condemned to death, as hath happened to many of them.

But as for the Jesuits, they are so well persuaded that they are never like to suffer any thing here in England, upon the account of their religion, that notwithstanding all the acts of Parliament, which are only levelled to prevent their wicked designs, they still continue here very freely and openly. And yet when they are got home, they will not be wanting to publish every where, as it is their custom to do, that they have been persecuted, shut up in prison, tormented, and had certainly been put to death, had not the intercession of the blessed Virgin, or some saint to whom they have devoted themselves, most miraculously delivered them.

But it is time I return again to Italy, where I find yet another sort of missionaries, who are not to be employed in foreign countries, but in Italy itself. These are all monks, sometimes of one, and sometimes of another order, but mostly Capuchins, and yet more ordinarily a certain sort

of friars, who are called the Fathers of the Mission. These, after they have furnished themselves with a good stock of sermons upon different subjects, send to Rome, and demand a mission from the Pope; that is, leave to go and preach their sermons in certain towns and provinces, with all the indulgences and power to absolve in, reserved; as is customarily granted on like occassions.

The first I ever saw of this sort was at Montefiascon, two days journey and a half from Rome. These were Capuchins, who besides their habit, which was very odd and antic, with their great beards, they had on their heads great red calots, or close caps, to signify their great zeal, and the red-hot ardour of their charity for the conversion of souls: for this (if we will believe them) is yet another mark of the true church; for even as the Holy Ghost did visibly descend on the heads of the Apostles in the form of fiery tongues, so there are to this day found those heads in the Church of Rome, whom the fire of scarlet distinguisheth from others; and that this also is the reason why the Cardinals, who are all divine love, (or to speak more truly, who ought to be so) wear red hats, and the Pope, a cap of the same colour. Well, to return to my red caps, I had the curiosity to go and hear them preach; I entered the church, where I saw one of them in the pulpit, with a great rope or cord about his neck, and a great crucifix in his arms, who did his utmost endeavour, to excite sensible affections in the hearts of his auditors. The chief aim of these preachers, is to make the people weep; if they can once effect this, they are happy, and this is all they desire; for this procures them the reputation of being great missionaries, and men of true apostolic spirit. To this end they make use of the most tender, melting, and affectionate ex-

pressions they can think of, to draw tears from their hearers.

The preacher I heard at this time, was paraphrasing the history of the passion of our Saviour; and after he had employed his utmost skill, in setting forth our Saviour as the most lovely and beautiful of all men, he on the other hand represented those pitiless tormentors, who with great cords tied his fair hands, white as the driven snow, and beat his lovely countenance, where the the lily and the rose did urge for mastery. He added to all these expressions a most lamentable and affecting tone, with gestures very proper and according to the subject. I perceived that this father was an excellent declaimer; when on a sudden some poor women wholly melted into tenderness and compassion, caused their sighs to be heard aloud, and a few minutes after, all that quarter where the women sat being in tears, the emotion soon caught amongst the men also; so that the whole church was filled with groans, sighs and sobs. Whereupon, the Capuchin resolving to prosecute his conquest, cast himself down upon his knees, and fixing his great crucifix upon the pulpit, he lifted up both his hands to heaven, and with a mournful and terrible voice, twisting the cord about his neck, as if he had a mind to strangle himself, he cried out, mercy! mercy! and continued in the same manner, to repeat the same word about forty or fifty times, till he made all his auditory cry so after him. Then there was a most dreadful noise heard in the church, which continued for a good quarter of an hour, till their breaths being spent, the noise began to lessen by degrees, and at last ended in a great silence; which gave occasion to the father to resume his discourse, which he continued with the same tender affections to the end.

I do not pretend in the least to blame here the

the sensibleness and tenderness of men's hearts, with respect to our Saviour's passion; I am so far from that, that I wish it were in my power to make a most deep impression thereof in the hearts of all men; but withal, this shall never hinder me from averring, that these affections do ordinarily pass away like lightning; and that good solid motives laid down in a sermon, to engage people to a truly Christian life, make a longer stay in a man's mind, and are there ready upon occasion to move the will; and this is that which these missionaries wholly neglect. Accordingly we do not find, that the Italians, (after all these missions) are ever a whit the better men. At the end of three weeks or a month, which commonly is the term of these missions, they go with a great deal of solemnity, and plant a great cross of wood (of about thirty or forty feet high) on some eminent place near the cities where the mission has been discharged, *ad perpetuam rei memoriam.* This action is performed with a great deal of ceremony and superstition; thither they all repair, and worship bare-footed, with cords about their necks; and here it is the preacher concludes and seals his mission, giving the people a grand benediction, and all the indulgences the Pope has afforded him.

It was once my hap to meet with some missionaries on Mount Apennine, who came from preaching in a city belonging to the county of Urbain. A lusty young man, who had been their guide for seven or eight miles together, and who had carried them on his shoulders over a brook, declared, that he had never found any thing more light than they were, and that he thought that they weighed no more than a feather. The hostess, at whose house they had lodged, answered smiling, that this miracle did surprise her the more,

because she had given them a good dinner just before their going away; and if there were nothing but what they had eaten, they must needs weigh something. The place where I met them was at another inn, where they notwithstanding caused a second dinner to be prepared for them. By this I perceived, that all these zealous missionaries, with their ropes about their necks, are not always the greatest lovers of penance, herein resembling the Pharisees, who though they carried the commandments of the law written on their foreheads, yet were not the strictest observers of it. And yet it is to these kind of missionaries, the Roman Catholics assure us, that the gift of preaching is particnlarly communicated by the Holy Ghost, in the particular dispensation and division of his graces and gifts. For my part, I should rather believe, that this excellent privilege does in the first place belong to the bishops and ministers of the churches; these are the true pastors, whom the sheep are to hear. Indeed we may say in one sense, that the ministry of preaching is quite ceased in Italy, where they hear in a manner nothing but the voice of strangers; I mean, of a vast number of miserable monks, who are not curates of churches.

I have already mentioned in one of my Letters, that during the space of seven years that I lived there, I never heard any man preach that had ecclesiastic authority; that is to say, who was either curate or bishop, except only Cardinal Visconti, archbishop of Milan, whose custom was to preach on the four principal feasts or holydays of the year, in his own cathedral. And yet herein also I found a great inconvenience; for this cardinal archbishop, that he might preach with the greater magnificence, and probably also by a motive of vain glory, would not permit any

sermon to be preached that day, neither in the morning nor afternoon; and this in Milan, which is a very great city, and full of people. The church indeed is very spacious, but yet I dont believe it can contain the fiftieth part of the inhabitants, at such a distance that they may understand the preacher: so that excepting only a certain number of persons, all the rest are deprived of hearing the word of God.

I went once to hear him preach on an Easter-day; I could say indeed that I saw him preach, but I could not hear him, the sound of his voice not reaching so far as where I was; and because of the great crowd, it was not possible for me to get nearer. He was magnificently apparelled in his pontifical habiliments, with the mitre on his head; and the pulpit of that cathedral being very spacious, he had several canons that assisted on each side of him, likewise dressed in all their pompous ornaments. Having therefore seen him for a good while, shaking his head, and casting abroad his hands, I went out of the church, without having understood one word that he said.

And forasmuch as I have now made mention of an Easter-day, I cannot refrain, Sir, from giving you some account of a pleasant, but yet truly detestable and abominable custom, which takes place on Easter-day throughout all Italy, in reference to preaching. They tell us, that Easter-day is a day of merriment and rejoicing for Christians, applying to this purpose that text of the Psalmist; *This is the day which the Lord hath made, let us be glad and rejoice therein.* And indeed it is such a day; but in another sense than they take it. Wherefore, to make the people merry, all the preachers on that day (however grave or serious they be) must play the merry-andrews in their pulpits, and act a kind of co-

medy, that the people may hear the preacher with the greater pleasure and satisfaction. The sermon that is used to be preached, during lent time, in the morning, is on Easter-day made in the afternoon; because (as the Latin proverb hath it) *Venter jejunus non delectatur musica*—a hungry belly takes no pleasure in music. The word *hallelujah*, is a common text to all the preachers on that day, which word, in its proper signification, is as much as to say, Praise the Lord; but on Easter-day, in Italy, it signifies, Gentlemen and ladies prepare yourselves for loud laughter. After they have named their text, they enter upon matter, and vent all the most ridiculous stuff they can think of. These sermons afterwards serve all the Easter-time for mirth and pastime in companies, where every one takes delight in relating to others what he hath heard.

Being once on an Easter-day in Bononia, I went to hear the sermon at the cathedral of that city, the archbishop himself being then present. The preacher was one of the Fathers Soccolanti. After he had turned several texts of Scripture into ridicule, he quoted the second verse of the sixteenth chapter of St. Mark, where it is said, that the Marys came to the sepulchre, *orto jam sole*—after sun-rising; as it is in the vulgar Latin; and opposed this to the first verse of the twentieth chapter of the Gospel of St. John, where it is said, "that they arrived very early, before it was yet day-light;" and then put the question, how it were possible to reconcile these two places, which seemed to contradict one another? "For his part, (he said,) he believed that the Marys did not rise till long after the sun was risen, and indeed, till it was near noon: for we see that this goes for very early rising with our Italian ladies, who do not come to mass on Sundays till it be half an hour after eleven or twelve." And here-

upon he began in a comical manner, to represent a woman awaking out of her sleep; the time she takes to rub her eyes, to stretch her arms, and a hundred other impertinent follies, which put all the church into a loud laughter. Afterwards (for this father was very fertile of his curious thoughts) he recalled himself, and said, "That indeed the Marys were risen very early in the morning, but that they needed so much time to dress and trick up themselves, that it was very late before they could get out of doors, which was the reason they could not reach the sepulchre till after the sun was risen; *Orto jam sole.*" Here he represented women dressing themselves; how much time they spend in dressing their head, in laying on paint, fixing their patches, and making an hundred faces before their looking-glasses; and expressed all these particulars admirably well. This curious thought he immediately backed with another. "I cry mercy! (said he) the Marys were not such vain women, as I have been just now describing; but they were gossiping housewives, they rose and went abroad indeed betimes in the morning, but before they could take their leaves of their neighbours, much time was spent; so that they did not come to the sepulchre until it was late—*Orto jam sole.*" Here he enlarged himself on the tattling and gossiping discourse of women, and mentioned such ridiculous stuff amongst it, that the cardinal-archbishop, who was there, burst into a loud laughter. He continued his Easter-sermon at the same rate, to the end of it, profaning (after a most heinous and unworthy manner) so holy a day, and the venerable history of these holy women, who were judged worthy to be the first witnesses of the greatest mystery of our faith,—the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I suppose, Sir, you will not take it ill, if I

venture upon another short digression, referring to another pleasant custom observed in Italy, viz. that of blessing eggs at Easter, which are of great virtue to sanctify both soul and body. On Easter-eve and Easter-day, all the heads of families send great chargers full of hard eggs to the church, to get them blest, which the priests perform by saying several appointed prayers, and making great signs of the cross over them, and sprinkling them with holy water. The priest having finished the ceremony, demands, how many dozen eggs there be in every bason? to the end he may know, how many of them come to his share; and sometimes are so honest, as to take three or four out of every dozen, especially when they know the persons who send them to be wealthy. There are some of the poorer sort, who are apt to cry, when they see the priest take more than his due, or pick out the fairest or greatest of them. These blest eggs, have the virtue of sanctifying the entrails of the body, and are to be the first fat or fleshy nourishment they take after the abstinence of Lent. The Italians do not only abstain from flesh during Lent, but also from eggs, cheese, butter, and all white meats. As soon as the eggs are blessed, every one carries his portion home, and causeth a large table to be set in the best room they have in the house, which they cover with their best linen, all bestrewed with flowers; and place round about it a dozen dishes of meat, and the great charger of eggs in the midst. It is a very pleasant sight to see these tables set forth in the houses of great persons, where they expose on side-board tables (round about the chamber) all the plate they have in the house, and whatsoever else they have that is rich and curious, in honour to their Easter eggs, which of themselves yield a very fair show; for the shells of them are all painted with divers colours

and gilt. Sometimes there are no less than twenty dozen in the same charger, neatly laid together in the form of a pyramid. The table continues in the same posture covered all the Easter week, and all that come to visit them within that time, are invited to eat an Easter egg with them, which they must not refuse.

I return now again to my sermons, upon which subject I have this only farther to add, that there is yet another sort of preachers, who only preach before the nun's grates. These are finacle preachers, of a sweet countenance, and commonly all of them handsome young monks; for except beauty and sweetness do meet in a preacher, the nuns who have the choice of them, will have none of him. All the study of these men is, to find out pretty words, and the most tender and affectionate expressions, and frequently to enlarge themselves in praise of the nuns, to whom they preach. I have heard many of these sort of preachers, and amongst the rest a young monk at Milan, preacher to the Benedictine nuns of the monastery called the Magiore. Scarcely could this monk speak three words together without some expression of the high value and love he had for them: "My most dear and lovely sisters, whom I love from the very deepest bottom of my heart," said he, which was almost the constant appendix of every sentence he uttered. So that having recollected all his sermon with myself, I found that the upshot (in a manner) of all that he had said, was, that he loved them the most tenderly and affectionately that could be. When once a monk has the good hap to become a preacher to the nuns, and that he is liked by them, he may promise himself a happy time of it ever after, and that he shall spend the rest of his days in a voluptuous delicacy and tenderness: for the nuns have nothing so much upon their hearts, as

to procure all manner of ease to their directors and preachers, to the end, to make them the more indulgent towards them. They allow them great pensions every year; they provide them with linen, and furnish them with dry and wet sweet-meats, and send them every day a dish of what they judge most pleasing and delicate, which they call the *Preacher's Dish*. So that, indeed, it is no difficult thing for these handsome monks to declare from their pulpits the extraordinary love they have for their tender nurses, and to be so lavish in their praise of them.

This way of praising others from the pulpit, puts me in mind of another custom the monks have introduced, to praise one another publicly on certain days of the year, which is commonly the feast of their blessed founders. Thus, for example, on the feast of St. Ignatius de Loyola, founder of the order of the Jesuits, they make the panegyric of that saint in all their churches; and after having enlarged themselves in the praise of their patriarchs, they proceed to that of his children and disciples, that is, all those who follow his rule, and more particularly of the fathers of that convent where the sermon is preached. But forasmuch as according to the common proverb, *Proprio laus sordet in ore*—that it is a base thing to praise one's self. They employ a religious of some other order to preach in their churches on that day. It is a thing but too notorious, that the monks do mortally hate one another, however, the desire of being praised themselves in their turn, prevailing beyond their hatred, makes them to undertake these otherwise unpleasing panegyrics. The Dominicans do publicly praise the Jesuits, and the Jesuits the Dominicans; and so for the rest. They all agree, that these are the most difficult sermons of all others, and that rarely one comes off with credit and applause,

partly by reason of the too insatiable desire of the one party, to be praised beyond measure, and partly because it goes against the grain with the other to praise them; which makes one, in the midst of their encomiums, discover something of force and constraint that evidences the falseness of them. Indeed, how is it possible to praise those heartily whose hearts we would wish out of their bodies?

A Cordelier preaching the day of St. Francis Xavier, in the Church of St. Lucia, belonging to the Jesuits of Bononia, praised them very pleasantly, attributing eulogies diametrically opposite to their known qualities and practice—"Do you see (said he) the reverend fathers, the Jesuits of this house?—they are the best men that live on the earth. They are as modest as angels; they never open their eyes to cast a look upon any of the ladies when at church;—they are such extraordinary lovers of retirement that you never see them in the streets;—they are so in love with poverty, that they despise and trample on all the riches of the world;—they never come near dying persons or widows, to importune them to be remembered in their last will;—they never concern themselves in making up of marriages;—they never go to compliment the Cardinal-Legate, or the Cardinal-Archbishop." And in this manner he ran over every particular of their behaviour and conduct. All that were in the church laughed at this pretty way of commending them the Cordelier had lighted on; but the Jesuits were galled to the heart, and put to the utmost confusion. The Cordelier, having ended his sermon, came down from the pulpit, and instead of going to the Jesuits' convent, there to be entertained, (according to the custom of preachers in the like case) he went directly to the gate; it seems he feared their giving him the lash, and

(I suppose) that to avoid their revenge, he never after would appear in the city of Bononia.

This, Sir, is the substance of what I had to write to you, concerning the manner of preaching and behaviour of the preachers in Italy. It remains now that I should oppose to them the way of preaching used by our Protestant ministers, and their profound and solid sermons; but lest you should accuse me of being too lavish in praising my own party, I shall at present content myself with telling you, that they declare to the people the word of God with a great deal of modesty and reverence; and, what is the chief requisite of all, they always keep close to the truth and purity of the gospel, in which I desire to live and die. I wish you the same grace, and am, Sir, with all my heart,

Your most humble servant, &c.

LETTER VII.

Processions.—Ridiculous Follies practised on these occasions.—Veiled Images.—Cross-bearers and Disciplinarians.—Processions of the Jesuits at Venice.—Mangers shewn at Christmas.—Exorcists and possessed Persons.—Some notice of the Corruption of Italian Priests and Monks, in their Doctrine and Morals.

HAVING passed the Lent-time at Rome, I departed thence some weeks after Easter, with an intent of returning to France. I took my journey through that part of the Grand Duke of Tuscany's country which borders upon the patrimony of St. Peter, or the Pope's dominions. The entrance into the Duke's territories is by *Il rè de Cophani*, which is a very high mountain, surrounded with many great woods, and is a very proper place for hunting, where I saw several cardinals who diverted themselves at that sport; from hence it is two days journey to Sienna. In my way thither I met with nothing but processions all along the road. It is an ancient custom established in the Roman church to celebrate several processions after Easter, which they call Rogations, in order to implore the blessing of God upon the fruits of the earth. The year wherein I took this journey there was a more pressing need of it than ordinary, because of the great drought which threatened a scarcity.

A procession, according to the definition of the Papists, is, "a walking or marching of people from one church to another, under the conduct of the priests, assisting with the cross and banner, there to invoke, by the intercession of some male

or female saint, the extraordinary assistance of God." These processions are sometimes two or three days marching before they come to the place designed; and when they have once dispatched the singing of their litanies, they play the fools as much as the pilgrims in their pilgrimages do, according to the account I have already given you in a former letter. So that I wanted no divertisement all the way from the *Rè de Cophani* till I came to Sienna, whither all these processions were going. Only I found great inconvenience when I came to my inn, because that wherever these processions pass they cause great scarcity, by reason of the numbers that compose them.—Being come to Sienna, I enquired what church it was to which all these devotions were designed; and was told that they all went to a church of our Lady, where they had lately uncovered a miraculous image of the Virgin, which was only done at the end of every forty years. My curiosity invited me to take a view of it, but the throng of the people was so great that I had much ado to crowd into the church. They told me that this thronging concourse had already continued for eight days, (for so long the image had been unveiled) and that after eight days more it was to be veiled again with a great deal of solemnity. I took an exact view of this image, which was about a foot broad, and a foot and a half high, the countenance of it representing that of a very young girl: neither could I find any thing extraordinary in it, for which it might seem to deserve the adoration they gave it. I enquired of the priests who served this church what was the reason that this image was unveiled only once in forty years? But they could give me no better answer than this:—"That it had been a custom observed time out of mind; and that they believed

the first rise of it was an order given by the Virgin herself for so doing."

I have in Italy seen a vast number of these veiled images, not only of the Virgin, but also of the crucifix, and of saints, and I can say with strict truth, that there is scarce a church to be met with which hath not two or three of them. Sometimes we meet with great pictures in their churches, where several saints are represented, and amongst them one only having his or her face veiled, that being the mysterious saint. The secret of which intrigue, as far as I could pierce into, by the use the priests and monks make of it, is plainly this:—they find this way admirably well suited to advance their temporal profit. The things we see every day become too common with us, and make little or no impression, by reason of our imaginations being accustomed to them. There are some parts of the world where they have six months of night and six months of day, so that their whole year consists but of a day and a night. Now we are told that the inhabitants of these countries assemble themselves in crowds to see the sun rise; whereas in these lands where the sun rises every day, we do not find people concern themselves to be present at his rising; and by a parity of reason we may conclude, that the images and statues of the Church of Rome would make no greater impression on the minds of the people, or be powerful enough to induce the opening of their purse-strings, if the priests had not found out this ingenious invention of making them more rare and therefore the more desired. Yea, it seems also, that the long time of their veiling begets something of a greater veneration for them; and that the Roman Catholics imagine, that when after so long a time they are uncovered, they meet with in those pictures,

images, and statues, something more august and divine than ordinary.

In a word, they do all believe, and take it for granted, that when these are unveiled here on earth, the saints whom they represent become more liberal in heaven, and more favourably inclined to grant their vows and prayers. Thus you see whither superstition or rather folly will run, when those who ought to be the most zealous to overthrow it, I mean the clergy, are the chief contrivers of ways and methods to foster and encourage it. The profit which from hence accrues to the priests is very great, as you will be able to conceive from what I shall tell you of this of our Lady of Sienna.

I spent nine or ten days in this city, and so had the leisure frequently to visit this church of the Virgin. I confess I cannot give you an exact account of the presents I saw there offered; and therefore shall content myself to tell you, that I do not believe any single person entered the church without giving something very considerable. And to encourage the people the more in their liberality to exceed and outstrip one another, the priests had the cunning to prepare a place railed in with balustrades, near to the altar of the Virgin, where they exposed to view part of the presents which the people had offered. Here were to be seen a vast quantity of whole pieces of cloth and fine linen, handkerchiefs, shifts, many rich jewels, and in particular, a prodigious number of great tapers of white virgin wax, whereof some of them could weigh no less than fifty pounds a-piece, the least of them being about four or five pounds each, with the names of the donors upon them. As for the money that was given, I suppose the priests put that into their pockets, dividing it amongst themselves; for though the people were continually pouring in money to the

basons, yet some hours after they were seen all empty. Some Spanish priests that were travelling homewards, having presented themselves to say mass in the said church, whilst they were in the sextry had rings presented to them by some of the country gentry, who supposed them to be priests belonging to that church, and had desired to have them fastened to some particular picture; but they conceived it more convenient to put them into their own pockets, and being got out of the church, prosecuted their journey with a great deal of cheerfulness for the booty they had so happily chanced on. One of them said merrily, "that he found no scruple in himself at all for having committed this lawful piece of robbery, as being in much more want than the image of the Virgin, who had no need either to eat or drink, as he had."

The following Sunday all the inhabitants of Sienna and the neighbouring places met together in different bodies, according as they were distinguished by their trades and callings; and all of them together made a great procession to the church of our Lady; every company marching under its own cross and banner, different from the rest, as under their proper standard. The coblers, as being inferior to all the rest, went first of all; the arms pourtrayed on their banner were two awls, placed salter-wise. These were followed by the shoe-makers, and so all the rest in their order. After every banner followed a man, carrying a great wax taper, which was that of the company, being all gilt, and adorned with ribbons and flowers, with a great scutcheon upon it. Besides which, every member of each society or company (which the Italians call *Scuole*) had his own taper of about three or four pounds apiece. After the cross, banner, and taper, came a man in a surplice, carrying a great purse

fastened to the end of a fine great staff, curiously gilt and painted, which contained the sum of money that each company was to present to the image of the Virgin. Some of these had about ten crowns apiece in them, and others twenty, more or less, according to the ability of each profession. In the purse belonging to the company of merchants, there were at least two hundred crowns, as I was informed by one of the merchants themselves.

All these companies do not assist at the processions in their ordinary clothes, but have over them great vests of fine linen, dyed of different colours, to distinguish the companies one from another; these they have girt about them with curious girdles, and upon the breast or arms, the device or scutcheon of their society; and have besides a great cowl, hanging down on their backs. After the company of merchants followed all the religious orders that are in that city or neighbouring places, which are very numerous; they march according to their antiquity or standing in the city.

It is on such occasions as these one may be diverted with the most pleasing variety of extravagant dresses that can be imagined; some are drest in grey, others in brown, and others again in black, &c., and all with their frocks and cowls shaped in different fashions, the pattern of most of which they pretend to have received from no meaner hand than that of the Virgin, or even God himself. Every one of these religious orders went under its own cross and banner, the difference only was, that their banners were not followed by either taper or purse, they leaving that ceremony to the seculars; as being very well pleased to see them bring plentifully to their churches, and are not wanting to encourage them thereto, by all the devices and ways imaginable;

but as for them, they take special care the seculars shall never be a farthing the better of them.

It would be an easy matter, one would think, for the Italians to reflect a little on these practices, if once they were willing; but that is it which puts out their eyes, that they are *unwilling to discover the cheat*. For to speak the truth, Sir, what does hinder these monks, that are so rich, and most of whom have great revenues belonging to them, from making up a purse amongst themselves, as well as the seculars, and to be at the charge of a great taper to present to the Virgin, as well as they; but that they do not find themselves in the humour to furnish other priests with money, as knowing but too well, how they used to spend it? And yet, if the poor seculars should entertain the same thoughts of them, they would, at the tribunal of their confession, condemn such reflections as great impiety and sacrilege.

After the monks, or regular clergy, followed the secular clergy, viz. the priests, curates, and canons, who all appeared, likewise, with empty hands. The Cardinal-Archbishop was somewhat indisposed, who, (if he had been there) I am sure would, like all the rest, have assisted at the ceremony without either purse or taper. Both the orders of the clergy were followed by the magistrates of the city, and the officers of justice, all in robes of ceremony, with their tapers and purses; and last of all, the whole procession was concluded with a company of young gentlemen and sword-men.

The procession marched on towards the Church of our Lady in very good order, at the sound of trumpets and drums, and the air resounding with a continual *Ora pro nobis*. All their wax tapers and purses were left in the church in the hands of the priests, by which you may guess the great

advantage they make of these pageantries. "For (as the Spaniard said very well) the image does not stand in need either of meat or drink, and none but men can make use of the money, and other presents offered to it.

Two or three days after, as children please themselves in imitating the practices of their elders, the boys and girls of the town assembled themselves in companies. The school-boys and young girls got their masters and mistresses to conduct them to our Lady's church. They made purses of about two or three crowns a piece; so that about two days after the great procession, one could scarcely walk through the streets of Sienna; for the boys had got great cords, which they held at both ends, stretched out, to make all who pass give somewhat to make up their purses. Afterwards they provide themselves with wax tapers, little crosses and banners, and so went by way of procession to the church; where the priests gave them a very kind reception, weeping for very joy, to see such good beginnings in such tender and young years.

The sixth day they covered the image with a pomp and magnificence altogether extraordinary; at which time, there was a great concourse of the nobility and gentry of the city and country. The confluence was so extraordinary, that they were forced to set a guard at the doors of the church, who suffered none to enter but persons of appearance and quality. I heard an old gentleman, who with a great sense of devotion, blessed God with a loud voice, that he had vouchsafed him the happiness of having seen the same miraculous image two and twenty times uncovered during his life time. I was somewhat surprised at this expression of his; for had it been true, that the image (as was said) had not been uncovered more than once in forty years, it must have followed, that at that

rate, this gentleman must have been more aged than Methuselah. But I was informed afterwards, that there seldom passed a year, wherein (upon some emergency or other of public need requiring it,) the said image was not uncovered. This gave me a full notion of the cunning of these priests, who, to procure the vogue and devotion of the people for some of their images, do veil them withal, declaring them to be miraculous and so transcendantly holy, that it is not lawful to expose them to public and common view, more than once in several years time, except it be upon some extraordinary emergent necessity: and yet, as soon as they see that their device has taken, that the devotion of the people is kindled, and that their profits are sure, they have not the patience themselves to stay out the time of their own prefixing, before they discover these their lucriferous mysteries; but they lay hold of the opportunity of the first drought or wet season, and declare, that the fruits of the earth being in great danger, they are forced to uncover the image sooner than they had designed.

And thus an image or statue, which according to the first institution was not to be exposed more than once in forty years, is set forth almost every year; which proceeding of theirs is so far from being suspected by the deluded laity, that it gains them a great deal of reputation, and the esteem of very good and honest men, as being full of compassion, and extremely desirous to obviate and prevent all public calamities. The monks and priests do both of them perfectly well agree and harmonize in this point; for they have all of them some hidden idol or other in their churches, which they uncover at certain intervals of time, each in their due order, without interfering or clashing one with another, playing *hodie mihi, cras tibi.*

In those monasteries where the abbots, priors, or guardians are triennial, they have taken up the custom of vouchsafing this favour to the public at their first arrival in the monastery, and this commonly either by exposing the holy sacrament for three days together, or by uncovering some miraculous image or other. Neither doth the idol lose a whit of credit or repute for all this, because it is looked upon as an extraordinary occasion, and ceaseth not to pass in the minds of the people for a mystery not to be exposed but once in such a number of years. This was the shew I was entertained with at Sienna, one of the most superstitious cities in all Italy, and commonly called by way of prerogative and excellence, *Sienna the devout.*

After I had visited all the places of devotion that are in this city: I prosecuted my journey, and passing a second time through Tuscany and Florence, I came to Benonia, which is a very fine city. Formerly this place was a commonwealth, but at present the Popes have reduced it to their obedience, and have a legate there who commands in their name. Two days after my arrival I went to take a view of the fair and renowned abbey of St. Michael in Bosco, situate on a pleasant hill, about two musket shots from the city. It seems to have been placed on that eminence, to be seen and admired by all Italy. Above all other places, this is peculiarly famous for the curious paintings that embellish it, Carracchi, Guido Rhenus, and many other famous painters seeming to have deposited in this building the whole curiosity and perfection of their art, to make it the more recommendable to posterity. The religious that dwell here are *Olivetan monks;* they profess the rule of St. Bennet, and are habited in white.

As I was taking a view of the painting of the

grottos or first cloister, which is built with right angles, the abbot taking a walk after dinner with some of his religious, by an extraordinary piece of civility drew near to me, and took the pains himself to explain the pictures, which represent some very considerable particulars of the life of their legislator St. Bennet. After which he conducted me to their library, which is all curiously painted, and furnished with very good and fairly bound books, and certainly is one of the neatest I have seen in Italy. Where being entered into discourse concerning some of those books, the abbot made a proffer to me of staying in the said abbey, and teaching humanity and rhetoric to his religious; telling me, that if I thought good to accept of it, I should be entertained at his own table, and enjoy a very competent allowance. Though at this time I had no design of staying in Italy, and that I was now actually engaged in my journey for France, yet this occasion so favorably presenting itself, and meeting with a strong inclination in me to acquire a further perfection in the Italian tongue, after two or three days respite I had desired of the abbot, to consider of it, I accepted of his offer. He appointed me a very good salary, and assigned me twelve of his young monks for my pupils. They were almost all of them either earls or marquesses; for these fathers receive none into their society, but persons of the highest quality. I continued two whole years in this employment, during which time I received a thousand marks of kindness and civility from my young religious scholars, besides the continual experience I had of the bounty and generosity of the noble prelate.

You cannot doubt, Sir, but that by this means I had the fairest opportunity I could wish for, to penetrate all the secrets of monkery, for they kept nothing from me; and though I was not one of

them, yet I lived and continually conversed with them, neither was any thing hid from me. Wherefore, I may say without boasting, that I can speak of the monastic way of living upon good grounds, which I intend to do before the conclusion of this letter. But at present, as I have already begun with giving you some account of the manner of their processions, so I intend to prosecute the same subject; and the rather, because I find here, in this city, matter enough for the purpose, and such as is very curious too. I shall begin with the processions which are celebrated during the octave, or week of the holy sacrament in the city of Bononia. The feast of the holy sacrament having been instituted on purpose *to make the Host to triumph*, as the Papists say, they omit nothing that may render that day, and the week following, the most pompous and solemn that may be. They make many fine processions, and carry the consecrated Host (which they say is the living body of our Saviour Jesus Christ) through their streets, with very magnificent shows and ceremonies.

In France, it is the custom on this occasion to adorn the fronts of houses with curious tapestries, and strew the streets with flowers and sweet smelling herbs. They erect oratories, or repositories, (as they call them) at certain distances, there to repose the holy sacrament, as if it were very weary with the march it had taken. They dress up abundance of little children like angels, to strew flowers in the way before it, and to incense it; and in a word, they make a thousand idolatrous prostrations and adorations to it. In Germany, they adorn all their streets with the branches of trees on both sides of them, by this means turning their cities into parks, or forests, or rather into fine gardens, whereof every street represents a long walk, as far as one could see,

all set with trees and verdure. But Italy being the most ingenious of them all, as well as the most superstitious, does by many degrees excel all other nations that profess the Roman Catholic religion; and the city of Bononia exceeds the rest of Italy, in her famous celebration of the octave of the holy sacrament.

Besides the great general procession which is made through that city, the Thursday after Trinity Sunday, (which is the day appointed for their feast) at which all the clergy, both regular and secular, with all the magistrates of the city do assist; there are every year three parishes appointed to furnish and make preparatives for the octave; and having discharged their turn, they are quit of that expence for twelve or fourteen years after, until all the rest have had theirs; this being a very changeable office. About a fortnight or three weeks before the feast, they barricade all the entries of the streets of those parishes, to hinder horses and carts from passing that way, that the workmen may apply themselves to their work without disturbance. The chief work, and that which is most painful, and takes up most time, is, to cover all the streets and walls with veils of silk, which is the manufactory of that city, and to form them into figures and histories. The several parishes, when their turn comes, strive to outvie one another in some new invention or other. Some with these little veils, represent all manner of birds, others all four-footed beasts, insomuch that a man cannot so much as imagine any whose figure is not to be found there. Others endeavour to represent in the said silken figures, huntings, battles, triumphs, and in a word, an infinite number of things extremely pleasing to the eye. Moreover, they expose to public view in the streets, all the most curious pictures which the inhabitants of those parishes are masters of, not

excepting the profane ones themselves; amongst which are to be seen many infamous naked pictures and grotesques, to cause laughter.

The Bononians are extremely curious in pictures; all their closets, halls, and chambers, are hung with them; and, forasmuch as they expose them to public view at this time, travellers meet with the satisfaction of seeing very rare and curious pieces of art. Over and above all this, altars are erected almost in every corner to the streets, set forth and adorned with statues, images, and vessels of gold and silver; and upon every altar there is always a representation to the life of some mystery of our religion, or some saint. The houses of the great lords of those parishes that furnish the ornament of the feast, are open to all: As long as this feast lasts, they take care to adorn their chambers as sumptuously as they can, and to expose all their riches to view. There are some of them so splendid and liberal as to bestow cooling liquors, called *sorbetti*, upon all comers, or at least upon all persons who appear never so little considerable; and in their courts or gardens they have fountains running with wine in great abundance for the common people.

All things being thus prepared, the procession begins; this is a work on which the priests exhaust their invention, and rack their brain to bring forth something new and unlooked for, that may please the spectators. They dress up a great many little children like angels, with wings at their backs; they make very lively representations of all the figures and types mentioned in the Old Testament, which they conceived did prefigure their holy sacrament, as Abraham sacrificing his son Isaac, the offering of Melchisedec, the shew-bread, the paschal lamb, &c. They represent all the prophets and sibyls, that have prophesied of our Saviour; and last of all, they make a shew

of the blessed Virgin, the twelve Apostles, and our Saviour, who follows them with a loaf in his hand, as if he were about to break it, as he did at the celebration of his holy supper. Besides these, they also give us the representations of many saints, who were most devoted to the holy sacrament, as St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Anthony of Padua, St. Rose of Viterbo, &c.; all these they represent by living figures, that is, young boys and girls, choosing the prettiest and handsomest they can meet with. Above all, I took notice of many little St. John Baptists among them. To represent these, they take little children of four or five years of age, strip them stark naked, and put nothing upon them besides a coloured ribbon, which, like a belt reacheth from their right shoulder to their left thigh; in one hand they hold a great cross, made of reed, and very light; and with the other, they lead a little lamb in a string.

After all this pageantry follow the priests in magnificent habits, and next to them follows the holy sacrament, which is carried under a rich canopy, surrounded with an infinite number of young boys and girls, attired like angels, who all the way strew flowers before it. Near to the canopy there is always an excellent company of musicians, who sing hymns and songs of the holy sacrament, being those the church of Rome has composed since the council of Trent, in honour of it. The canopy is followed by the principal men of the parish; and after them, to shut up all, a vast crowd of people of all sorts. In this manner they *walk our Lord*, (to use their own expression) throughout all the streets of the parish; but yet so as to give him leave to repose himself at the end of every street, on the altars erected for that purpose.

When the procession is ended, they do not for

all that take away the adorning of their streets, but leave them whole and entire for many days; to give the citizens leave to view them at their leisure, and to walk the same round the procession took; for in so doing they believe they shall merit much, and obtain great indulgences. All the *Sbirries* of the legate and archbishop do guard these pageants all night, to prevent the stealing of them. And it is chiefly at night that the gentlemen and ladies of the town walk abroad to take a view of them, because then they make the finest shew; all the streets being illuminated with a vast number of white wax tapers, set thick in every corner, which very much exalt the splendour of those rich and pompous ornaments. Here it is they court their mistresses, make assignations, and dispatch notes to one another, and in the end, always some miserable wretch or other is left a cold victim on the ground to the revenge of his enemies, or the jealousy of his rivals. In a word, it appears that the most innocent are those, who repair thither only to satisfy their eyes, or please their curiosity; for as for devotion, there is not so much as the least shadow of it to be discerned amongst them. Thus are these fine gaudy feasts, instituted on purpose to confound the Protestants, within a short time, by a just judgment of God, become the shame and confusion of Papists themselves; and I have reason to fear, that the Lord Jesus will tell them to their faces, at that great day in which he will come to judge both the quick and the dead, that his soul has abhorred their feasts, and that their incense has been an abomination unto him; because instead of advancing his glory by them, as they seem to pretend, they have only endeavoured to satisfy their own curiosity, vanity, and infamous lusts.

I have been a spectator of many other proces-

sions, made in honour of the holy sacrament at Venice, Milan, and other parts of Italy; but I will not take up time to give you the particulars of them, because they generally are the same thing over again; except only, that their adornings of the streets are not so curious, neither continue so long a time as those at Bononia. I cannot find that the priests reap any great benefit from these processions, but on the contrary are at the charges of adorning their churches and altars: but however, they hereby gain much credit and repute to their priesthood and masses; and they appear at them with so much majesty, and drest with such pompous ornaments and habiliments, that it makes the people conceive a greater veneration for their persons. However, they know very well how to repay themselves the charge they are at, upon other occasions: it is but unveiling one of their miraculous images, when they have a mind to reimburse themselves, double and treble. And probably it is for this very reason, that at Bononia (a short time after the octave of the holy sacrament) they make that great ceremony and procession of our Lady of St. Luke. To give you some idea of it, I shall tell you, that about five miles from Bononia, upon a high hill called the *Mount de la Guardias*, stands a church, wherein is kept an image of the Virgin, which the Papists tell us was painted by St. Luke himself. The priests have so bestirred themselves, as to persuade the magistrates to put the city under her protection, giving her the title of their patroness and conservatrix; *Patrona et conservatrix Bononiæ*. They have caused a coin to be stamped in honour of her, which on the one side bears the representation of the image pretendly painted by St. Luke; and on the reverse the arms of the city, which piece of money they call a *Madonnin*. The magistrates have made a

vow, to go and fetch this image every year, and carry it in procession: they bring it from *Mount de la Guardias* to their town, to the end she may bless its inhabitants.

Many days before this solemnity, great preparations are made to fetch her off in triumph. Having got her into the city, they make her stay there eight days, during which time they remove her to two or three churches, where the people flock in throngs to visit her, and offer great presents, all which accrue to the profit of the priests of those churches. After that they have sufficiently idolized this image, or picture, they oblige her to give her blessing to all the people. To this purpose they fasten the picture to great staves or poles, supported by men; and lifting it on high, they make it bow and incline towards the people, as if she saluted them. This done, they lift her up a little higher, and incline her downwards again; and then stoop her down towards the right and left, that so she may make the sign of the cross over all the people that are present; and this, forsooth, is her blessing to the people. To receive this benediction with the greater reverence, all the people are down upon their knees, with their faces bowed down to the ground. All this while the trumpets and the drums do wonders. After this ceremony is over, she is conducted back again, in the same processional way, to the place of her abode, where she continues all the year after, excepting some public calamity oblige the magistrates to permit the bringing of her extraordinarily to the city in procession; for in that case, they believe she will not fail of redressing all the evils they can lie under. Every Saturday there is a vast concourse of people comes to this image from the city of Bononia, and adjoining places.

To make the way more commodious for those

devout pilgrims, the Bononians have undertaken to make a covered way, which begins at the gate of the city, and is intended to be carried on to that of the church, where the image resides. Above half of this way was already finished when I was there. The whole is composed of great porticos of brick, very large and high roofed, the roofs being all curiously painted, and the bottom is paved very neatly with great square bricks. When this portal is finished, it will be one of the most curious pieces of workmanship in all Italy. Many noblemen have signalized their zeal for carrying on this work, having each of them made several arches of it at his own charge: on which they have caused their arms to be painted. But in the mean time, though the work be already so far advanced, yet some are afraid they shall never see it brought to perfection; because the remaining part is the most difficult to compass, and will cost much more than what is already done; for this portal is now to be carried on up the mountain, till it reach the Church of our Lady on the top of it; and to this end they must be obliged to dig very deep to find firm ground whereon to lay a solid foundation. A good curate, perceiving that the devotion of contributing to this vast expense began to grow cold, found out a very ingenious way to excite the drowsy and lethargic charities of the people, making use of the following device:—

He acquainted his parishioners "that he felt himself inspired by the Virgin to make a procession to the miraculous image, with twelve waggons laden with materials for carrying on this structure. He desired them to shew their zeal in contributing to so good a work; and that, for his part, he would take care to range the procession in order, according to the model the Virgin had been pleased to give him of it in a dream." His pa-

rishioners very punctually executed the orders he had given them, lading four waggons with brick, four with lime, and four with sand. The curate, seeing their forwardness, sent every where for flowers and sweet herbs to cover the waggons, and to make garlands for the oxen that drew them; he got their horns and hoofs gilt, and set himself at the head of this convoy, with a cross and banner, having procured several young girls with timbrels in their hands to play upon them, and dance about the waggons, as David did before the Ark. In this equipage he passed through all the streets of the city. He had the approbation of the Italians, who are much delighted with new and well contrived inventions, and especially wherein women and girls come to play their parts.

The good success this curate met with, besides the general approbation, put all his brethren upon doing something in imitation of him, and, if possible, to go beyond him. So that about a fortnight after there was to be seen a general procession of all the parishes, with above two hundred waggons laden with bricks, lime, and sand, drawn by oxen with gilded horns. I never saw a more extravagant procession than this was, nor a more pleasant one. The march advanced in very good order, with crosses, banners, priests, and girls that danced, towards our Lady of St. Luke, and helped to build a great part of that portal. As soon as it is finished they will be able to go, (at all seasons, and in all weathers,) from Bononia to the place of devotion, without wetting or dirting themselves, any more than if they were in their own houses.

But that I may not wander too far from my subject of processions, I shall further acquaint you, that the monks do far excel the priests in their invention on these occasions. There is

scarcely a holiday or a Sunday passes over their heads without some procession or other made in their monasteries. The Dominicans make a procession of the Rosary every first Sunday of the month, and the second Sunday the Carmelites make one in honour of the Scapulary; the third Sunday the Soccolanti celebrate a procession in honour of St. Anthony of Padua. It is in these monkish processions that all is put in practice wherewith lewdness and vanity are capable of inspiring the most loose and effeminate souls; so far are they from being religious, and fitted for devotion as they pretend them to be. By the small taste I shall here give you of them, you may be able to judge of all the rest. I shall begin with a procession of the Rosary, which I saw at Venice, made by the Dominicans of Castello, which was ordered in this manner:—

Next after the cross and banner went about two or three hundred little children, dressed like angels, and others like saints, amongst which they did not forget to place a good number of St. John Baptists; these were followed by thirty or forty young women, representing so many saints of their sex. One of them represented St. Apollina; and to distinguish her from the rest, she carried in her hand a bason gilt and enamelled, in which there were teeth; another represented St. Lucia, and carried in a bason two eyes; a third St. Agnes, who carried in her arms a living lamb; and so of the rest, every one of them being characterised by their marks of distinction. There were some of them that were prepared on purpose to make people laugh, and above all the rest a St. Genevieve, who had a lighted wax taper in one hand, and in the other a book wherein she read, or at least made shew of doing so: and round about her there were seven or eight young boys dressed like devils, all over as black as a coal, with great

long tails, and very extravagant and ridiculous countenances, and great horns on their heads; these skipped about the saint, and made a thousand ridiculous postures, apish tricks and faces, to endeavour to distract and divert her from reading her breviary, by making her laugh. The maiden who acted the personage of this saint had been chosen by them on purpose of a melancholy temperament, who accordingly acted her part very well; she always kept her eyes fixed on her hours, without giving the least shew of a smile, though all the spectators that were present could not contain themselves from bursting out into loud laughter, to see the ridiculous postures these little devils put themselves into, and who were certainly most impudent youths. This saint was followed by another, as fit to make the people laugh as the former; this was a St. Catherine of Sienna, who had by her side a pretty little boy, with a broom in one hand and a pair of bellows in the other; for they hold, that this saint (who was a religious of the Dominican order) had so great a familiarity with the child Jesus, that the divine infant, to ease her when she was weary, frequently came and swept her chamber, and kindled her fire. After those good saints came all these whom they call figures, comprehending all those holy women, who, according to them, did represent the blessed Virgin in the Old Testament; they were carrried upon frames on men's shoulders. Among the rest there was Jael to be seen in her tent, with Sisera lying at her feet, who was a beautiful youth, dressed in the garb of a warrior, and she with a great nail and hammer, making shew as if she had been ready to pierce his temples. After this came a Delilah, sitting in an elbow chair, with a comely youth sitting between her knees, she had a pair of scissors in her hand, as if she had been about to cut off his locks. After these

appeared Judith. This was a fine figure indeed; for on the frame where she was there were upwards of twenty persons, it being the representation of Judith's return to Bethuliah in triumph with Holofernes' head, when the priests and people came out to meet her, and sung a song in praise of her. This Judith was one of the most beautiful young women in Italy, but very indecently dressed; round about her (upon the same frame or pageant) they had placed several excellent musicians, who sung some ravishing stanzas in honour of her. The following pageant, as if they had a mind to oppose deformity to beauty, supported a good old woman without any teeth in her head, and very deformed; who muttered something within her gums, and represented Hannah the mother of Samuel. I was astonished to see a woman of her age who would trust herself on a pageant. She was followed by many pageants, which were in all eighteen in number, with their different figures. But I shall not insist upon a particular description of any more of them, that I may not tire you out; and shall only tell you, that the last of them all was the truth of all these figures, and the person typified, viz. the blessed Virgin, who was represented by a very comely and beautiful maid, very richly dressed with a great royal robe; she held a great rosary or beadrow in her left hand, and in her right hand a sceptre. She had a rich crown upon her head, set thick with pearls and diamonds.

People of quality in Italy take it to be a meritorious service, to accommodate the saints of both sexes with their richest jewels at these processions, which is the reason that very frequently, on these occasions, great riches are exposed to view.

I observed, that when this young woman, who represented the blessed Virgin passed by, no

body bowed himself, or fell down to worship her, or call upon her; but a little while after, when the wooden image of the Virgin came to pass by them, (which is the same that stands on the altar of the chapel of the rosary of the Dominicans of Castello) all the people fell down on their knees, and, beating their breasts, called her the Mother of God, and prayed to her. They made her, at certain distances bestow her salutations and benedictions upon the people, in the same manner as I related to you, speaking of our Lady of St. Luke of Bononia, and which were received by them with a great deal of acknowledgement, as a very great favour. Having applied my mind to find out the reason why the Papists do not pay their adorations to living figures, though they indeed represent the Virgin more naturally than a piece of stone or wood can do, and yet are so exact in bestowing them on their inanimate statues; after having spent some thoughts upon it, I could not light upon any other reason but this:—that human nature, having a kind of horror impressed upon it, of rendering to the creature a worship that is due to God only, all living figures, and especially those of men and women, do more fully discover to the sense their weak, dependent, creaturely being, than inanimate things do, in which they suppose there is some secret inherent divine virtue. Though, to speak truth, this is no other than the highest pitch of folly, and the root and rise of all idolatry. But to return to our procession.

This image of wood was carried in the midst of the father Dominicans, who were to the number of an hundred; for they having many convents in Venice, they are ready to assist one another upon the like occasions. They had great rosaries on their arms, but there was none of them that troubled himself to say them, except it were some

old father amongst them that was going out of the world, and was no more fit to make any figure in it; but all the rest of them strutted and marched in the most wanton manner in their fine white habits. All the way they went they talked and laughed together, casting their eyes this way and that way on the ladies that looked out at the windows, or stood in the streets to see the procession move along.

I do not think, Sir, it will be necessary for me to desire you to make some reflections on these kind of proceedings; because you cannot but take notice from the recital I give you, what all these processions aim at. Certainly they are, at the best no better than entertainments for children, or rather ridiculous farces to please fools, but which at the same time expose the Christian religion to the reproach and derision of atheists and infidels. Some persons reported to me for a truth, that they had overheard some Turkish merchants, who were spectators at this procession, saying to one another, "Have you ever seen the like extravagant fooleries? And must not a man be bereft of his senses before he can ever be persuaded to embrace such a religion?" The Papists boast themselves in this, as an infallible mark of the truth of their religion, "*That there is no one Christian society in the world that takes more pains for the conversion of infidels, and who are blessed with a greater success in that undertaking than themselves.*" But supposing all they say be true, yet I am sure it may be said with much more truth, "*That there is no Christian church in the world which is a greater obstacle to the conversion of infidels than their's is; and that for one whom they convert, they hinder a million from being converted, who probably might come to the light of the gospel, had they not been eye-witnesses of the gross folly and idolatry of their pretended religious prac-*

tices: yea, they are even found in the use of those things which make Roman Catholics of foreign countries to blush for them when they are told of it." The English Papists look upon such relations barely, as exaggerations and calumnies devised by their enemies, to blacken them. All that I can say to this sort of people is, That if they please to go to Italy, their own eyes will be able to convince them of more and greater extravagances than those I have related to you in any of my Letters. The very same follies were formerly in vogue and practice in France; but the sight only of the Protestants that were mingled amongst them, have made them drop a good number of them. Thus, by a special effect of the goodness of God, the presence only of Protestants carries a kind of blessing with it, which secretly reproves and corrects vice, confounds error, and inspires truth.

I will add to this procession I saw at Venice, another I saw at Milan. This was celebrated by the Carmelites in honour of the little Scapulary, wherewith I have entertained you in a former letter; and that I may not trouble you with a repetition of the angels and figures, which were of the same kind as those I have already given you a description of, I shall only take notice to you of such particulars as were singular, and different in the procession from those before related. One thing very remarkable in this procession was, that most of the young gentlewomen of the town assisted at it in their richest clothes, and adorned with all their jewels. They marched four in a rank, with great white wax tapers in their hands, and all the way they went, sung the psalms and hymns to the blessed Virgin, that are used in the Roman Church. The women in Italy are not wont to sing in their churches, it being forbidden them, except those only who are of some religious order. However,

the Carmelites made bold to introduce this piece of novelty, either to give themselves the satisfaction of being charmed with so many sweet voices, or at least to flatter and please the humour of the Milan gentlemen, who were extremely pleased with the device.

It was about an hour and a half in the night when the procession began to set forth, and the light of the wax candles and torches, much increased the lustre of the beauty and ornaments of this choice band. After them came the fathers Carmelites, two and two together; so that this whole procession was only composed of women and monks, with a wooden image representing the Virgin, which brought up the rear, and to which all the spectators paid their adorations, kneeling down in the streets when it passed by, to receive its salutations and benedictions, which the good fathers that bore the statue made her bestow upon the people.

The monks and priests please themselves extremely in making such like processions in their several churches; because it is upon these occasions, that they appear with a pomp and lustre, that dazzles the eyes of the people, and makes the simple imagine they discern something more than human; though indeed all this at the bottom is no more than a foolish vanity, and pure illusion of the spirit of this world. We do not find them so zealous for, and ready to assist at those processions, that have any thing that is painful annexed to them, and at which the ladies cannot conveniently assist. This is what I observed at Milan, at the time of the rogations that are kept in Ascension week. It is a custom observed in all countries that are of the Romish communion, to make processions the three days before holy Thursday; that is to say, to go with cross and

banner from one church to another, to say their prayers.

Now at Milan this procession begins not till an hour after midnight, and does not end till the next day at two o'clock in the afternoon. All the priests of the city and adjoining places are bound to assist at them, not excepting those who are strangers. They must meet precisely at the hour appointed, at the sound of the great bell of the cathedral, in order to range themselves under the cross and banner. But because the great allurement is wanting in these kinds of processions, the priests had rather sleep far in the day, than take the pains to assist at them; but the cardinal-archbishop, though he does not care for going himself, has at last found out a way to make them go, though sore against their wills.

The procession goes in one morning only to ten or twelve churches, where they enter and stay for some considerable time, to sing their litanies; but forasmuch as the priests, by reason of their great number, cannot all enter into the same church, the far greater part of them were obliged to stand abroad in the streets, but they, not liking this waiting, found a means to take up all the adjoining taverns and victualling houses, and there made much of themselves, whilst their brethren were singing in the church; and after they had well solaced themselves, went and relieved their brethren, giving them an occasion to do as they had done; and by this means the office was despatched with much more courage and vigour. But the thing in itself being so base and scandalous in the eyes of the seculars, and some complaints having been made of their disorderly carriage to the archbishop, he ordered some thirty of his *Sbirries* should always coast about the procession, and search all the taverns for priests, and if they find any, to drive them thence; so

that the poor priests being so nearly watched, are debarred of the opportunity of refreshing themselves with a glass of good wine; however, this does not hinder but that some of them take care to have a bottle of wine in their pockets, or some other convenience under their surplices, and when they have a mind to take a sup, they stoop a little, and very dexterously refresh themselves, in spite of the machinations of their enemies.

When the procession enters into any churches belonging to monks, the priests get themselves into the convent which joins it, where the monks (that any of them are acquainted with) treat them with meat and drink, as much as they desire; and here they are secured from the search of the *Sbirries*, who have no power to look for them there; and should they attempt such a thing, would find but a very bad welcome. As soon as the procession is arrived to a certain church, specified by the archbishop, the twelve ecclesiastical præfects of the twelve gates of Milan, who are all arch-priests, and who have the inspection of all the clergy divided amongst them, assemble themselves at some great place, and every one of them having a list of all the priests that are under his jurisdiction, they read their names aloud one after another, being all of them obliged to answer to their names, and present themselves. If any one be found wanting, the same day a note is sent to his house, to pay twenty crowns mulct for his absence. The whole ceremony being finished, the procession returns to the cathedral.

Now it is apparent that these rogation processions are so very displeasing to them; because, first of all, there is nothing to be gained by them. In the second place, there are no ladies to assist at them. And thirdly, there are neither angels nor figures, to give them the least sport or diversion. In the fourth place, they are not permitted

to solemnize these processions in their pompous habits, but simply with their surplices and square bonnets, which is the cause why the seculars will not so much as step out of their way to see them pass. Fifthly, the procession being enjoined them under rigorous mulcts and punishments, this is that which makes it go most of all against their stomachs to assist at it, for as much pleasure as they take in imperiously commanding others, so much regret they have to obey and be subject to the command of their superiors. And last of all, in these kind of processions, there are some inconveniencies to be endured; they must leave their beds long before day; they must take many large turns and wearisome steps, and sing long without either eating or drinking; which does not very well sort with their humour.

The jolly processions of the holy Sacrament have much more charms for them; for the unveiling of some miraculous image, or the pompous procession of the holy nail, which is celebrated every summer in Milan, and to which not only the inhabitants of that city, but all the nobility and gentry of the neighbouring towns and provinces flock in crowds, to be the spectators of that ambulatory pomp and magnificence. In this case, there is no need of the *Sbirries*, to oblige the ecclesiastics to assist at it. The cardinal archbishop himself assists in person, and carries the relic of the holy nail; and, according to their tradition, this is one of those nails that pierced the adorable body of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, when he was nailed to the cross; which Constantine the Great having met with, in honour to it, made it part of his horse's bridle. It is now exposed to view, enclosed in a very fair chrystal, fixed upon a large pedestal of pure gold, of incomparable workmanship, and embellished with precious stones, and is certainly one of the richest

and finest pieces that can be seen, and so heavy, that the cardinal had much ado to carry it. The nail is crooked, as having been made a part of a bridle.

The reflection I have made upon this nail is, that according to the history itself, which the Papists give us of it, it apppears, that the relics, and especially the instruments of the passion of our Saviour, to which they at present pretend we are obliged to render *Latria*, that is, divine worship, did not in ancient times receive any such honour, since Constantine, (as they own themselves) made that nail a part of his horse's bridle; which nobody will be so impertinent as to own for a piece of divine honour. He did not cause it to be set upon the altar, as it is at present; neither did men kneel before it, as the practice of the Papists is at this day.

And since I am insensibly fallen upon the processions that are in vogue at Milan, I think myself bound to give you the description of one of the most famous that city can boast of, being the same which is put in practice the eve of holy Friday. This procession is celebrated by torchlight, and proceeds in order as follows:—

Immediately after the cross and banner follow the cross bearers; these are men that carry great crosses on their shoulders, fifteen or twenty feet long; they are very great and heavy in appearance, but hollow within, and indeed are nothing but four thin boards glued together; yet I am apt to believe, that by reason of their great bulk, they are a reasonable good burthen for a single man, and troublesome enough to those that bear them; and accordingly they tell us, that these cross bearers perform this piece of devotion from a spirit of repentance and penance, and to imitate our Saviour Jesus Christ, when he carried his cross up to Mount Calvary. There are no less

commonly than two or three hundred of them, and the most of them have ropes about their necks, and great chains on their legs, which trail on the ground after them, and make a hideous noise. Their faces are covered with great cowls.

In the midst of these cross-bearers was carried a figure of our Saviour going up to Mount Calvary. Then followed the Discipliners, as they call them; these also had their faces covered with great cowls, and having their backs stark naked, with great disciplines they had in their hands they cruelly beat themselves, making the blood run down their shoulders in a manner, that caused horror to nature. In the midst of these flagellators was carried a representation of the scourging of our Saviour, tied to a pillar. After these followed several companies of soldiers, with their musquets and pickets, the points downward, and the colours in like manner. All the drums were covered with black cloth, and beating upon it made the sound very doleful. After the soldiers followed a living figure of our Saviour, which was a young man drest in a large purple robe, with a crown of thorns on his head, and bearing a great cross on his shoulders; he had round about him near a score of youths habited like Jews, who put themselves into a hundred ridiculous postures, and made faces at him after such a manner, as forced the spectators to laugh at a sight, which ought to have melted their hearts into sorrow and compunction; neither was this a strange thing amongst them, their holy representations being very rarely exempt from some notorious profanation. There was no kneeling to this figure, because it was a living one. It was followed by all the confraternities of the city of Scuole, which are very numerous. They marched two and two, with wax tapers lighted in their hands, and after them followed another figure of our Saviour laid in his

sepulchre. As soon as this came by, though it was only made of wood, all that stood in the streets, fell down on their knees and worshipped it. About this figure there marched a company of women all in mourning, who held their handkerchiefs before their eyes, as if they had wept. Next to these women followed the priests, and after them a statue of the blessed Virgin, having her heart pierced with seven great swords, that stuck fast in it; they commonly call this, our Lady of Pity; and wherever it passed, they paid to it the same prostrations and adorations as to the statue of our Saviour; a great throng of people, last of all, concluded the procession.

I know well enough, that the Papists will not only excuse these kinds of processions, but will also exalt them far above their plain ones; alledging, that these are all of them holy representations, which renew in our minds the idea of what past long ago on Mount Calvary; but for my part, I believe that the time they take to dispose and regulate these kinds of processions, and which the spectators spend in seeing them pass by, would be much better employed in reading and meditating on the history of our Saviour's passion in private, in order to the enkindling of holy affections, suitable to that great occasion. This, I say, would in all probability be a far more efficacious means to obtain this holy end, than to dress up a man like our Saviour, and turn all to a farce, to make the people laugh at so tremendous a mystery; for this indeed, however they may otherwise disguise it, is the end of all.

Thus likewise it is, when five weeks after Easter they represent the ascension of our Saviour Jesus Christ into heaven; they have a great statue of wood to represent him, which they tye with great cords about the head, and just at

noontide of Ascension-day, at the ringing of all the bells in town, and in presence of all the people, certain persons placed on the roof of the church, draw it up by cords into the air; the priests in the mean time singing the anthem, *Viri Galilæi quid admiramini aspicientes in cœlum? &c.* When the statue is ready to enter into the hole, which they have made on purpose in the roof, there are men posted, who from the high galleries of the church, cast some twenty or thirty pails of water on the spectators; so that many of them are wet to the skin, which makes the rest break out into loud laughter. This is the devout end of this fine ceremony, or holy representation, as they are pleased to term it. I have seen this particularly practised in Germany; where I have also seen as great a number of cross-bearers and discipliners as in Italy. And indeed, to judge by outward appearance, one would believe these persons to be animated by a greater spirit of devotion and mortification; but having made it my business to search into the matter, I found that most of them are engaged to do it for interest sake, being paid for lashing themselves, because the ecclesiastics think it a shame, if in a Lent procession they should not have a good number of these men of discipline, and cross-bearers. Others again do it, because their confessors have enjoined it on them as a piece of penance.

I know indeed no reason why the priests should pride themselves with this, but sure I am, I have often heard them reproach one another, that they had none, or very few scourgers in their processions. It is possible, that by a sottish kind of vanity they may suppose, that the glory of these kinds of public penances reflects upon themselves, as being the imposers of them, in which case their vain glory is no better founded than the crow's in the fable, who prided himself in what was none

of his. They are very well pleased to see others lash themselves, but not so much as one of them will be an example of it to others; for never in my life did I see either priests or monks whip themselves in public. These whippers and cross-bearers, for the most part, to make this piece of penance more tolerable to them, drink themselves to a good pitch before they set out processioning.

Whilst I was at Mentz, in Germany, I saw a great inconvenience and disappointment happen upon this occasion, where many of these cross-bearers, in the midst of the procession, threw down their crosses in the streets, and very fairly set themselves down upon them, saying, that they had borne them long enough, and that it was but fitting the crosses should now bear them. Besides, many of the discipliners fell a singing and dancing, vomiting the surplus of the wine they had taken. Most of them were Jesuit scholars, whom their regents had forced to this involuntary mortification.

By this, Sir, you may easily discern, that the Papists will make all things bend and stoop to their fancy and humour. They have almost framed to themselves a new gospel, and they interpret the mysteries of it so materially and grossly, that in the end they will probably persuade people, that to bear their cross in this world is nothing else but to go a processioning with great crosses of wood upon their shoulders; and consequently maintain, that it is a mere heresy to believe with the Protestants, that true mortification is that of an humble and contrite heart, and of a soul pierced with an holy sorrow and repentance for sin. It is scarcely possible to make the Popish Jesuits and priests, that come into England, acknowledge, that these sort of foolish exercises of devotion are at this day the most frequent em-

ployments of the Roman Catholics, in those places where that religion takes place. They are so ashamed to own their follies, that at present none but travellers are able to convince them thereof, who can tell them, that they have seen with their own eyes what they so impudently deny with their mouths. It was an effect of this shame that made some Italian and German Jesuits, in my presence, treat a chapter of a certain book as containing nothing but mere calumnies, because it mentioned a devotion which is still every year practised in Italy and Germany at Christmas, which is the ceremony of rocking the cradle of the child Jesus; and yet there is nothing more true, than that this custom is much in vogue amongst them, myself having seen it done several times. Their way is this: they make on an altar, or some chapel of their churches, a representation of the stable at Bethlehem, with great figures representing the blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, and the child Jesus lying in the manger.

It cannot be denied but that there is something in these representations that does extremely take the eye. You have a pleasant prospect here of rocks, fountains, forests, and delightful green plains expressed to the life, and shepherds feeding their flocks upon them. You see people from all parts coming through lanes and paths, to offer their presents to the child Jesus. All this is very naturally represented, and there is always some merry conceit or other joined with them, to make people laugh. But the principal point I am at in this description is, that there are many great ribbons, or cords, tied to the cradle of the child Jesus, which the spectators that are there present, and upon their knees, do pull towards them very devoutly, to rock the cradle, in like manner as we see nurses do their children, and then sing

what in Italian they call their *Nà*, *Nà*, which are songs commonly sung to rock children asleep. But that which surprised me beyond measure was, to see sometimes old men and women rise up from their knees in great anger, when they heard too much noise made in the church, and bidding them be hushed, for that else they would awake the child Jesus; which, notwithstanding, is no more than a piece of wood or paste-board painted over; yea, there are some so fearful of offending this way, that they pull off their shoes as soon as they enter the church, for fear of troubling the child's rest; whilst (in the mean time) their monks and priests, standing behind in their sextries, laugh at all these their follies.

I can say, that I never saw any of them lay hold of the cords to rock the cradle, and they would be sore ashamed to be found so sottishly employed. And probably they would be understood in this sense, when they say, that it is never practised amongst them, because they do not do it themselves; but they are very glad to see the seculars so well employed for their diversion. Neither is this child's play altogether without profit to them; for there are many of the visitants who bring fresh eggs, and others pullets and capons, to make caudles and broths for the Virgin; all which they lay in the stable, near the image. Others bring cheeses and great bottles of wine, which they lay near the image of St. Joseph; and others cast money into a great bason, which the priests hold out to them, and which (as they tell them) is to be laid out to buy necessaries for the child Jesus.

I happened once to be at Mentz in Germany, in the sextry of the Jesuits, with five or six of them. It was a diversion to us to see the presents they made to the manger. A poor country fellow (amongst the rest) brought with great simplicity

and devotion a great truss of hay, and laid it down in the holy stable, between the ox and the ass; but the Jesuits, perceiving it, said one to another, "fie, fie, this must be taken away immediately; it will prove a very bad precedent; at this rate they will bring nothing but grass and hay for the beasts. No, this must not be; they had much better bring good gammons of bacon and neat's tongues for St. Joseph." The sexton accordingly ran to take it away, but the countryman briskly opposed him, saying, "that he could not endure to see the ox and the ass die for hunger, whilst the rest were so well provided." But they endeavoured to appease him by telling him, "that the child Jesus would take care to sustain them with his divine virtue sooner than that should happen." Thus, for a miserable and base interest, they most outrageously abuse the poor, and keep them in ignorance, and afterwards, to advance their impiety to the highest degree, they make a virtue of it, giving it the name of simplicity and innocence. It is before these sort of mangers that (according as I have told you in a former letter) they set little children to preach.

I have made bold upon this occasion to make this short digression, which I hope will not be displeasing to you. I return now again to our processions, by giving you a relation of another unveiling of an image of the Virgin which I have seen at Milan, and which (as I was told) was only done once in fifty years. All the corporations of the city and of the neighbouring places, made their visits to it processionally, with wax tapers, purses, presents, and ceremonies, not much unlike those I have already related to you. The only thing singular in this uncovering was, that all the while the image was unveiled there was a great concourse from all parts of possessed persons, the priests being very busy in all corners

of the church to exorcise them. The Papists maintain, that their priests in their ordination receive the power of casting out devils, and that the effect shews they are successful in it. For my part, I have seen very many of these possessed persons, and I have diligently applied myself to search into and examine the matter, but could never discover any person able to persuade me that those effects or operations proceed rather from the devil, than from a strong imagination or from some violent distemper. Besides, I seldom met with any but women that were possessed, and I would gladly be informed why the devil should rather attack them than men.

But whatever the priests of Rome may pretend, certain it is, that the absolute power they claim over the devils is not so evidently verified in them as they would make the people believe it is. I have seen possessed persons, and exorcisms pronounced over them in quantity, but I never saw any of them freed of their possession by this means. I know it is commonly said there are beggars who count themselves possessed, that by this means they may procure a good maintenance all their life after; and as for these indeed, I question not but their priests have power to deliver them of their counterfeit possessions. This cheat of the beggars procures vast credit to their mysterious images, which are but once unveiled in fifty years time. But I will leave these possessed to come to a conclusion of what I have said concerning Popish processions, which they define, as I hinted at the beginning of this letter, "a marching or walking of the people from one church to another, under the conduct of their priests, with the cross and banner, there to invoke the extraordinary assistance of God." But in deed and in truth, according to the account now given you of them, does it not appear to you, Sir, that they

may with much more right be defined, "Pompous and magnificent walks, invented on purpose to enhance the credit and repute of the monks and priests, and to abuse and gull the people, for their own advantage?" We have not the least footsteps of these kinds of processions in the primitive centuries of the church, as being only an invention of the pope's brain, and, if I be not much mistaken, St. Gregory the Great was the first that instituted them at a time of the plague. In his time they were celebrated with abundance of modesty; but the luxury and ambition of the clergy have, in process of time, so much amplified them, that it is as clear as the sun at noon day that they serve for no other use at present but to give them the advantage, and make them triumph over the seculars. Besides, they serve for public marks of honour, whereby they are distinguished amongst themselves. There is nothing they are more jealous of than their precedency in processions; the priests and monks often quarrel with one another on this occasion; and some times their contests break out into great disorders, as it happened not long since at Dijon, in France, where the monks of St. Bennet having undertaken to go a processioning with great canes in their hands, as an ensign of their authority over the rest of the clergy, the canons of the holy chapel rose up against them, which occasioned a furious skirmish between them, with their crosses and banners.

The order observed in all processsions is, that the meanest march first, and those of the highest rank and quality last of all; so that the bishop is always the last man that shuts up the procession. The Jesuits being of so late standing in the church of Rome, and not having been able to obtain the precedency they affected of their senior orders at processions, have wholly renounced them, and never assist at them. Only at Venice the

senate obliges them to go in procession with the rest; and to avoid mingling themselves with the priests or monks, they rather choose to march amongst the tradesmen. The coblers, shoemakers, and tailors march first of all, and after them come the Jesuits, who are followed by the other trades.

I shall now conclude this subject; and without detaining you with an ample moral application of all this, shall only tell you, that as it is so apparent and visible that these kinds of processions in the church of Rome are only made to serve the ends of ambition and temporal interest of the clergy, that the best processions we can make, are not to march from one church to another, but to *advance from one virtue to another*, until we arrive at the holy mount of God, viz. a blessed eternity. *Optima processio sit procedere de virtute in virtutem, usque ad Montem Domini.*

I have already acquainted you in my last, that my abode for two years together in the city of Bononia, at the abbey of St. Michael in the Wood, afforded me a very favourable opportunity of penetrating into the lives and manners of monastics; and I might have staid there much longer, if the persuasions of a noble Venetian had not prevailed with me to go with him to Venice. It seems as if Divine Providence had conducted me thither, to put me in a station where I might take a nearer view of the conduct and conversation of other ecclesiastics, commonly called secular priests; not so much because I was ignorant before of their way of life, having been always brought up amongst them, and one of them, but because I found a considerable deal of difference between the secular clergy of Italy and those of France, amongst whom I had my education. The former of these live without any restraint, and without being much observed or taken notice

of by their own countrymen, whom they have corrupted as well in their practice as in their principles, as I shall more particularly make out to you in the sequel hereof; whereas the latter (that is to say, the ecclesiastics of France) have studied the art of dissimulation, and are more upon their guard, to avoid their being exposed to the censure of Protestants, whom they regard as so many spies upon them.

I was no sooner arrived at Venice, but I had the good luck to procure myself the protection of some of the most considerable persons in that republic; so that in less than a month's time I was provided of three small benefices, in three different churches, which gave me an occasion of conversing with a vast number of clergymen of all nations, who resort to this city of liberty, there to enjoy the pleasures of this life. After I had staid three years here, I undertook another journey to Rome, having been drawn thither by the promises of a cardinal, who died eight days after my arrival there. This unlooked for accident having defeated the hopes I had formed of making a longer stay in that city, I departed thence some months after. Having visited before the city of Naples, I took my journey towards Milan, without any design of making a stay there; but the persuasion of some noblemen of that country made me change my resolution. The abbot of St. Victor, amongst others, made me very considerable offers, to induce me to stay in his abbey, and to take upon me the care of instructing his religious, according as he knew I had done in the abbey of St. Michael, in Bononia, that was of the same order as his, which at length induced me to yield to his desire. By this means I found myself anew engaged with monks.

Having therefore more especially applied myself, during my abode in Italy, to find out the

ways the priests and monks had to dispose of and spend their vast revenues, I found that it was only to satisfy and glut their domineering appetites. Some of them are such idolaters of Mammon, that the more they heap up, the less they think themselves possessed of; and thus die in the midst of their riches, from which nothing but death could separate them.

I have known several priests who have had their coffers full of gold, and notwithstanding grudged themselves a piece of dry bread; and some of these were so dexterous, as to make their sordid avarice pass for a love of abstinence and mortification; but in the mean time were so far from bestowing the least alms on the poor, that they could not endure that any one should ask them a charity; whence it is obvious, to make this discovery, that so fair a virtue as abstinence is, could not be the inmate of such sordidly covetous breasts. For according to this saying,—*Sublevamen pauperis sit abstinentia jejunantis*,—the abstinence of him that fasts ought to be a relief for the poor.

Others bestow their money in building palaces for themselves; I say palaces, for though indeed it would much better become their profession to provide for themselves houses, in which some marks of that Christian humility might be discerned which is so indispensable a qualification in ministers of the altar, yet so far are they from this temper, that they spare no cost to erect for themselves most stately and sumptuous fabrics, beyond the magnificence of the palaces of the greatest princes. For proof of what I here alledge, we need only cast an eye upon all the monasteries of Italy; and those who have travelled those countries know, that the palace which is found near the church is always the curate's house. Others consume their revenues in making much

of themselves, and contriving ways for their pleasure and diversion. For seeing they have no families to provide for, "it would be a profanation (say they) of the gifts of God, (so they call the immense riches they have got by their masses,) in case they should not make use of them, to make much of themselves in this world, who do so much good to the souls of purgatory in the other." For this reason it is that we see their tables so deliciously and profusely covered, and that they entertain one another, by turns, with such exquisite splendour and magnificence, insomuch, that their inclination this way has authorised that proverbial expression, so common in Italy, by which they call any extraordinary dainty "*Boccone di Preti ó di Cardinali*,"—a bit for a priest or a cardinal. What I have here said concerning those objects that please the palate, is to be understood proportionably concerning all other things that do any way contribute to a luxurious and delicious life, which they take care to procure for themselves with a superfluous profuseness, altogether inexcusable. Should any man be tempted with a desire to see the very utmost height of vanity, of wantonness, and of effeminacy, he needs only to take a view of the court of Rome, which, as it is composed only of priests and monks, so it boasts itself of surpassing in gallantry, pomp, and magnificence, those of the greatest and most potent monarchs of the earth.

Here you will find bishops that have two or three bishoprics, and abbots that have five or six abbeys apiece. It is a kind of disgrace for an ecclesiastic to have no more than one benefice; for indeed without a great revenue one can make no figure in this court of priests; yea, the vanity of this court is mounted to that excess, that the members of it are so far from blushing at it, that they make it the principal matter of their glory

and boasting. A cardinal or bishop does not make a hunting match—does not feast his consort, but the whole world forsooth must ring of it. All the gazettes we have from Rome are full of such vanities as these, that my lord the cardinal N. has given a visit to one of his colleagues, that another was at the opera, or caused a rich livery to be made for his retinue, and appeared in public with a train of so many coaches.

I have often made it my diversion whilst I was at Rome, to see the cardinals (on Sunday mornings) ride to the Vatican, when the Pope held chapel there; they are tricked up like so many scarlet puppets in their coaches, and all their creatures are about them, with an air that proclaims them extremely effeminate and wanton. After all, I confess a man must needs have a very strong faith to believe, that this sort of people are no sooner met together in a chamber, but the Holy Ghost is instantly in the midst of them, to give law to the consciences of all men. If to meet together with such excess of ambition and vanity. be to meet in the name of the Lord, it is certain that our Saviour Jesus Christ, who appeared in so mean and humble a condition, did not come into the world in the same name. Every cardinal has his nephew or nearest kinsman with him, who holds his scarlet hat in the boot of the coach; which is a signal honour to him, and a mark of his being the most beloved creature of the cardinal.

It is this nepotism that made such a noise in the time of the late Pope Innocent XI, and which he (who, to give him his dues, was a man severe enough in his morals,) resolved wholly to extirpate, having begun the reformation in his own house; but we see now, that things are quietly and without noise returned to their old channel. All the endeavours of Pope Innocent the XI.,

were only like the sprinkling of a little cold water upon red hot iron, which serves only to make it more fiery and glowing. And for my part, I must own, that I cannot conceive how a church (where flesh and blood ride so gloriously triumphant, and prevail to that excessive degree) can ever have the face to boast, that *the gates of hell shall never prevail against her*. This nepotism, or exaltation of their nephews, does not only take place at the court of Rome, but, (whether from imitation, or by natural inclination of promoting those who are nearly related to us) we find it obtain amongst all the rest of the clergy, who are not perfect slaves to avarice, or the love of pleasure. They think of nothing else, but how they may enrich those of their family, whose humour pleaseth them best. I confess, indeed, that this is the most commendable and most innocent way of employing their treasure, as carrying some appearance of charity in it; though, (to speak truth) we can never make a Christian virtue of it, as being common to us with the heathens themselves; the Turks do good to those of their kindred and friends, as well as the priests of the Church of Rome, and probably also do it during their lives, which these latter are very seldom found guilty of, because they commonly do not dispose of their riches to those of their family, till they see death ready to snatch them from them. This nepotism, therefore, is a vast gulf which swallows a great part of the ecclesiastical revenue.

Let any one go and search as long as they please in cloisters for that spirit of chastity, poverty, and obedience, which in them is expressly professed, and after all, it is certain he will find less of these than in many secular families; but sure it is, the pope always finds them ready to furnish him with what sum of money he stands in need of. The reason why the popes institute

so many new orders, is, because they are morally certain, they will not stand long, without falling and departing from the rules and strictness of their first institution, and that this will make way for their supression, which cannot but be of vast advantage to them. It is not long since that one Pope suppressed three of them all at once, viz.— the order of St. Jerom, that of the Jesuits, and that of the Waters, who likewise professed the rule of St. Jerom. The institution of this last order was a very pleasant one, and their exit was as ridiculous.

The first fathers of this order being inspired (as they said) by the Holy Ghost, set themselves to distill waters and spirits, for the relief and service of poor sick people; and this their distilling of waters, was their character of distinction from others, and made them to be called Fathers of the Waters. A short time after, all this spirituality was reduced to a distilling of beautifying waters for ladies, to make their hands white, and to preserve or augment their beauty. All these three orders were become extremely rich and scandalous, when the Pope thought fit to suppress them, and to unite to the patrimony of the church all their possessions, giving their churches to other monks, who, at the bottom, were never a whit better, than those they were taken from. This was, indeed, a very rude treatment for them, thus at once to divest them of all their revenues and incomes, and to force them, though sore against their will, to the practice of their vow of poverty, by reducing them to beggary, and the charitable benevolence of their friends and acquaintance. This is that which makes the monks so much to dread these suppressions; and the Popes, who are not ignorant of it, have nothing to do, but to threaten them therewith, whenever they have a mind to a squeeze considerable sum

of money from them; which method the late Pope Innocent XI. several times put in practice, as well against the order of the canons regular, as several other congregations of the order of St. Bennet.

The order of Mount Olivet alone, at one time, made him a present of a hundred thousand crowns, to appease his anger; though it was not long before this, that another Pope had squeezed out of them, by the same artifice, the sum of four hundred thousand crowns, and because for this reason it was impossible for them to raise that sum in ready money, within the short time that was allotted them for it, he gave them leave to engage their funds, and to mortgage the land belonging to the monastery; which they did accordingly, and making a dexterous use of this conjuncture, by striking whilst the iron was hot, they desired of the Pope, whom they found at that time in a good humour, to give them leave to receive pensions from their kindred and relations, and of possessing land in propriety; which was in effect to request, that notwithstanding their vow of perpetual poverty, it might be lawful for them, to be as rich as any other seculars; and yet as contradictory to their vow, as their request was, the Pope had the conscience to grant it, not only to them, but to all other religious houses, from whence he drew vast sums of money.

This is that which at this day makes the monks of Italy so full of money, and so well lined; for besides the competent allowance they have for their subsistence from the monastery, many enjoy besides considerable annual pensions from their families, which they spend at their pleasure. I have known some of them myself, that had no less than £1000 sterling, annual pension. The cardinals perceiving that the Popes draw so considerable advantage from religious orders, are not

wanting on their side, to make them as profitable to themselves as they can; and to this end have found out the way of selling them their protection, for as much money as they can raise them to. Each order has its cardinal protector, to whom they allow an annual pension of three or four thousand crowns; and this, for to obtain their favour and protection at the court of Rome, upon occasion. The abbots of the congregration of Mount Olivet, finding that Innocent XI. was resolved to suppress them, or at least, made a shew to be so, they immediately had recourse to their protector, the cardinal Faschinetti; they writ a letter to him, wherein they declared, the great danger in which their congregation was, and earnestly entreated him, to make use of all his credit with the Pope to stave off this fatal blow from them, and that in consideration of this seasonable service, they would augment his pension with the additional supplement of one thousand crowns a year. I was present at the very time when the cardinal opened this letter, and having read the promise they made him of one thousand crowns augmentation, he cried out in a most tender and affectionate tone, "Ah my dear congregation of Mount Olivet, I will never suffer it to be said, that so great an affront should happen unto thee, whilst I am thy protector;" and immediately thereupon sent his secretary to the Vatican, to desire audience of the Pope, upon a matter that was extremely pressing, and of great importance. He had the good luck to be admitted to audience, at the very time when the act for suppressing the order, was actually drawing up. His eminence cast himself at the Pope's feet, and told him weeping, that if he did proceed in his resolution it would certainly be his death. The Pope seeing him in this posture, lifted him up with a great deal of kindness, and the cardinal being

his old friend, he promised, that for his sake he would not suppress the order, as he had intend; and accordingly we see it subsist until this day, though the monks be never a whit better than others who have been suppressed.

My pen is weary of setting down all those scandalous and ridiculous actions, but yet, because there is no evil from whence some great good may not be drawn, I heartily wish, Sir, that from what I have here written, as well as in all my other letters, you may at least derive this benefit, to be convinced, that the first argument which put me upon writing these letters, and upon which you rely so much for your confirmation in the Romish religion, is a very poor, weak, and dangerous one; viz.—that it is not possible, that such a great number of monks and priests, who sit at the helm of your church, should be all of them in error, and consequently, that they may be very safely relied upon. This is one of those arguments we call *Circulus Vitiosus*, a vicious or faulty circle. The seculars repose themselves in matters of faith upon the priests and monks; and if we divide the priests and monks, as they divide them at Rome, viz.—into priests on this side, and on the other side the Alps, we find that the latter rely on the former, who are Italians; and these again repose themselves wholly on those at Rome, that is, upon that number of ecclesiastics that are about the Pope, and who, in their opinion, pass for very great doctors. Now, these again on the other hand, do not rely so much upon their own science or learning, which they know to be very mean, as upon the great number of priests and seculars, who believe them. This made one of their great preachers declare from the pulpit, that it was an invincible argument to prove the truth of transubstantiation, because there was such a vast number of those who believed, in comparison

of the inconsiderable number that denied it; that their Catholics being twenty to one, were to be accounted the strongest, so the truest.

I shall not employ my time here to shew, how weak and frivolous those arguments are, that are drawn either from the number or dignity of the persons that profess it; it shall suffice me, that I have exposed to your view the discovery I have made of the unfaithfulness and falseness of your pastors, and how much it is their outward interest to abuse you, and to deceive themselves whilst they impose upon you. For as they are well pleased to be made use of by the multitude, as an argument to enforce their belief; so God suffers them to make the same multitude an argument to confirm their own belief. If one blind man leads another, they must both of them fall into the ditch; and if one leads twenty, they must undergo the same fate. It is a much surer way for us to rely upon something we know to be fixed and solid, (such as we know the Scriptures to be, and to endeavour to penetrate the true sense thereof,) than to repose our confidence upon men, who being blinded by their interests, or passion, may afterwards blind and deceive us also for company.

I shall conclude this account of my journey, or rather the remarks I have made during my stay in Italy, with the recital of some small circumstances which deserve to be taken notice of. From Milan I took my journey towards the Lake de Como, where I embarked to go to the Valteline; and from thence I again passed over the Mountain Splug, where (in my way) I gave a visit to the curate of Campodolcino, my old acquaintance, who was a doctor of Milan; he was much surprised to see me there again, and especially when he understood by me, that my intention was to take another journey through the

country of the Grisons into Switzerland. He advised me very seriously to beware of the heretics, and to converse with them as little and as cautiously as might be. I told him, it would be a very difficult task to avoid their conversation in a country, where they are every where mixed with the Catholics, or so much as to know and discern them. Whereupon he told me, that I might easily discern them by their manner of discourse; for (saith he) you shall not be a quarter of an hour in any of their company, but you shall hear some of these words coming from them, *the purity of the Gospel; the liberty of the children of God; the written truth; the Testament of Jesus Christ;* and other like expressions, tending to exalt the holy Scriptures above the authority of the See of Rome. But this notion the doctor gave me of the Protestants, was so far from giving me an undervaluing conceit of them, that on the contrary, I took notice of something very pleasing and excellent in it, and which rendered them the more amiable in my eyes.

And as I was passing over the Alps, meditating on the description the doctor had given me of the Protestants, I conceived that what was objected to them as a crime, might very well be looked upon as an apology for them. Whilst my mind was taken up with those thoughts, I perceived afar off a company of little children, who came running towards me from a little hamlet, upon the mountain, to beg an alms of me; I observed, that these children begged only in the name of God, and for the love of Jesus Christ, by which I knew them to be Protestants; and though I was not then so well stored with money to be liberal to them, yet they were very thankful for the little I gave them, and returned peaceably to the village, having first bestowed a thousand blessings upon me. As I travelled forwards,

and was coming down the mountain, I met with another small hamlet, from whence also came forth a company of children upon the same design as the former, but their form of begging was very different, for they entreated my charity for the love of the blessed Virgin, of St. Anthony of Padua, and the souls of purgatory; neither were they content with the same charity I had bestowed upon the other children, but followed me with great importunity above a quarter of a league, repeating a great number of Ave Maries, and prayers for the dead; and after all, seeing they could get no more of me, they changed their prayers into curses, and took up stones, which they flung at me. I perceived by this action, that these little Catholics, were not so well taught and educated as the children of the Protestants, and that the doctrine instilled into them, did not produce so good fruit as the purity of the Gospel did in the others. In this manner I continued my journey through the country of the Grisons, and of the Swiss, and without tying myself to observe the advice of the curate of Campodolcino, I indifferently conversed with the Protestants and Catholics.

I know it is a difficult thing for people of a different religion, (though living under the same laws and government, as the Swiss are,) perfectly to love one another; however, I have observed, that the Papists spake with a great deal more of bitterness against the Protestants, than the Protestants did against them, though indeed these latter had much more reason so to do; for it was at the time when the persecution was carried on against the Protestants with a great deal of fury. I was very much edifiedwith the example of several French Protestants, fled into Switzerlsnd, who were so far from complaining of the miseries they had suffered, that

they exhorted one another, (with words of holy Scripture) to bear patiently those further sufferings their exile might expose them to. Neither could they endure to hear others speak ill of their persecutors, and testified themselves to desire nothing more, than that it would please God to pardon and convert them. There was an old gentleman, who in my hearing, with a great deal of charity reproved a young French soldier, for being transported in passion against the French king; asking him, whether the reading of the holy Bible had taught him so to do? The youngman was dashed with this check, and desired him, to excuse a fault he had committed, by the regret he had, to see himself reduced to the condition of a soldier's life for a poor subsistence, after having lost all his estate in France.

When I was in Switzerland, and so near to Geneva, I resolved to spend three or four days there. I was lodged at the house of a good widow, who was a very zealous Protestant, and by this occasion found myself many times engaged, to dispute about matters of religion; and forasmuch as I was then maintaining a weak cause, I found the arguments put to me to be very strong, and though I did not immediately give up the cudgels, yet those I discoursed with, took notice of the moderation wherewith I gave my answers, which made one of the ministers, who was then present, say, "*That it were greatly to be wished, that all the priests of Rome had the same command of their spirits, because by this means, truth would have the better opportunity of discovering herself unto them, but that commonly they broke off all disputes, as soon as they found themselves pinched with the evidence of truth.*" The truth is, they behaved themselves towards me with a great deal of kindness and civility, and after the dispute was over, a fine

collation was dressed up, to which they invited me, desiring only of me, (by a kind secret reproach, which did not displease me, because I knew it to be just,) that I would be pleased to make this reflection upon their carriage, that their spirit was not like that of the Papists; "for (said they) Sir, you know very well, that if we had disputed as much either in France or Italy, to maintain our faith, as you have done here to defend yours, we should have been abused, clapt up in prison, yea, and burnt alive; but as for us, we are so far from having any recourse to such barbarous and horrid means, that we do not so much as upon that account think the worse of you; neither shall you perceive any thing from us, but the kindest entertainment we are able to afford you." I cannot but own, that I found in this their behaviour, something of that spirit of beneficence and sweetness, wherewith Jesus Christ and his first preachers of the faith, did convert such crowds of infidels and sinners; the idea whereof has been ever since impressed on my mind, and put me upon applying myself to reading the writings of the Protestants, and to weigh their reasons with a more unbiassed temper; and having found them solid, and founded on the word of God and the practice of the reformed churches, conform to those of the first ages of the church, God had been pleased to give me his grace, to dispose my will to embrace it, by abjuring all the errors of the Church of Rome, which I have, and utterly do renounce from all my heart, and wish you (in christian charity) the same happiness, as being,

SIR,

Your most affectionate, &c.

FINIS.

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